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The conceptual...
structural framework...
thinking subject...
the subject's...
CIPRIANO CASTRO AND THE
"LIBERTADORA" REVOLUTION: A HYPOTHESIS
IN HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

by

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History Senior Honors Seminar

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Preface¹

The conceptualization of time and space allows the structural framework for the cultural determination of a thinking subject. The process of thought, a consequence of the subject's desire to recognize and understand his existence, serves, then, as the universal basis for such a determination and ensures the survival of the cultural man. The dynamics of a cultural age are contained in such a process which can, in turn, bear the synthetical appreciation of an historical time-segment.

This attitude presupposes one's awareness of the dual function of language: as a means of description, but also as a tool for symbol. The analysis of language is thus a crucial factor for the understanding of a particular situation: words such as "nation," "nationalist," "army," "law," or "constitution," take a meaning of their own within a varying context that renders any a priori study invalid, or, at most, incomplete.

An attempt to go beyond the descriptive narrative, attached to what is usually called "Political History," will

1. Part of the material used for this Preface is taken from a series of three essays: "An Approach to the Problem of Cultural Epoch," "Is History the Synthesis of Culture?" and "An Approach to the Dynamics of a Cultural Age," written for the course "Modern European Intellectual and Cultural History" (History 167), taught at Duke University by Professor Harold T. Parker in the fall of 1970.

deliberately eliminate the unconditional surrender to an evolving time-pattern, and center on the event and its determinants. The analysis of an historical event is, then, a sympathetic process in which an a priori rationality is discarded. A total image is encompassed, leading to what Fernand Braudel calls "serial history."¹

This does not mean, however, that one must avoid relating the parts to an interpretative whole. Ideally, using Isaiah Berlin's terminology, the modern historian is both a hedgehog and a fox.² A theory of history is replaced by a hypothesis on history. The change is, essentially, a change in attitude from the historian with regard to the problem set forth.

On one hand, the set of variables (economic, social, political, cultural, psychological, etc . . .) worked with is expanded, on the other hand the framework achieved is set free from absolute constructs.

This study is essentially the making of an historical hypothesis. The time period: 1899 to 1908; the place: Venezuela; the event: an abortive revolution and its aftermath.

1. Fernand Braudel, Ecrits sur l'histoire (Paris: Flammarion, 1969).

2. Isaiah Berlin, The Hedgehog and the Fox (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970).

Acknowledgements

The idea for the topic of this paper originated in a series of talks that I had with Professors John D. Martz and Harold A. Bierck of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and with Professor Federico Brito Figueroa of the Universidad Central de Venezuela. I would like to thank them for their encouragement and advice throughout my work.

The research for this paper that I conducted in Caracas was greatly facilitated by Mr. Erasmo Colina, Head Librarian at the National Academy of History, by Dr. Blanca Alvarez Freytes, Director of the Biblioteca Nacional, and by Mr. Rafael Ramón Castellanos, now Venezuelan Consul in Bogotá, Colombia, the owner of the Librería "Historia," a treasure mine for material on Venezuelan history.

I would like to extend thanks to General Eleazar López Contreras, whose kind hospitality I have enjoyed, and whose reminiscences were of great documentary interest to me. I am also grateful to Mrs. Mary Matos de Pérez Matos, the daughter of General Manuel Antonio Matos, and her husband, Enrique Pérez Matos, whose youthful memories of the Libertadora helped me guess at the "flavor" of the period. I am also indebted to Mr. Juan Röhl, to Mr. Pedro Rafael Cárdenas, Don Eduardo Michelena, Dr. Edgardo Vivas Salas, and to the late Mrs. Enriqueta Martínez Olavarria, all of whom provided me with important bibliographical material, and pointed out to me several lesser known aspects of the Castro

regime.

My gratitude is due to Mrs. María Cárdenas de Villamizar and her husband, Don Ramón Villamizar, the present owner of the "Los Vados" hacienda. The information which they helped me gather and the generous hospitality which they offered me during my field trip to the Andes region and to Cúcuta, reaffirmed the warm ties of a longlasting family friendship. I would also like to thank Monseñor Parada, parish priest of Independencia (Capacho nuevo) and present curator of the small Castro museum, for his cooperación.

In Paris, my research through the diplomatic documents of the Quai d'Orsay Archives was made a genuine pleasure by the diligent assistance of the lovely Mademoiselle Geneviève de Montlaur. In London, Professor Robin A. Humphreys, Head of the Institute of Latin American Studies of the University of London facilitated my introduction to the archives of the Public Record Office.

I would also like to thank Dr. Berta Becerra, Head of the Latin American section of the University of North Carolina library, at Chapel Hill for her help and concern. Thanks are also due to Mr. Emerson Ford of the Duke University Interlibrary Loan Section, to Mr. Peter McManus, who processed the photographs that illustrate this paper, to Mrs. Olive Sherman, my typist, who has been patient enough to bear with me through two hundred odd pages of my handwriting, and to Mr. Michael L. Perna, a companion-in-exile, whose help in

the proof reading of my drafts I deem invaluable.

To Dr. Harold T. Parker, the Director of the Senior Honors Program at Duke University I would like to convey my respects and appreciation. An outstanding professor, a concerned and questioning spirit, he has helped mold the Senior Honors Seminar into a place where one can become more completely aware of the exacting, but rewarding task that it is to become an historian.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, and more particularly my mother. She has taught me what little I know of our common fatherland, and what little I know of life in general. Her generosity and love and support are beyond any kind of repayment on my part. May this paper serve as a token to that effect.

I take, of course, full responsibility for the interpretation of the material I have used. The errors found within are solely my own.

Duke University

September 1971

March 1972

To two exceptional beings: my parents,
with all that is implied in a formal dedication.

Note

It is customary in Latin countries, particularly among prominent families, to have the mother's family name follow that of the father, when giving a person's full name. E.g. Santiago (surname) Briceño (father's name) Ayestarán (mother's name). A person is usually referred to by the father's name. In some cases, however, common usage demands that both the father's and the mother's name be used. E.g. Guzmán Blanco, Torres Cárdenas, Tello Mendoza.

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Prologue

The Plaza Bolívar is located in the center of Caracas. On the east end of the square stands the Cathedral, a white, awkward building, one of the few in Caracas that survived from the Colonial Period, its clock-tower having been truncated by an earthquake in 1812. In front of the Cathedral, on the other side of the square, stands the Casa Amarilla, the "Yellow House," the former Presidential Palace, now harbouring the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The other two ends of the square are occupied by the Municipal Council building on one hand, and the Governorship of the Federal District of Caracas on the other.

The Plaza Bolívar, still, in a way, like the main square of a village, sums up the spiritual and temporal life of its people. It was there, supposedly, that on July 25, 1567, Diego de Losada, in the name of Christ and the King of Spain, laid the foundations of the new city. It was there that on May 8, 1799, José María España was executed for having plotted a revolution to overthrow the dominion of the Spanish Crown and establish an independent republic.¹ It was there, from the balcony of the Casa Amarilla, that, on April 19, 1810, Don

1. A commemorative plaque, on the wall of the Casa Amarilla, reminds one of this event.

Vicente de Emparán, Captain-General of Venezuela, faced the crowds and asked: "Do you still want my government?" Prompted by Canon Cortés de Madariaga, who favored the independent cause, and who was standing behind Emparán, to answer: "No," the crowd sealed the fate of Spain's last official representative. It was there where, more prosaically, the market used to be held, once a week, until the 1870's when President Guzmán Blanco, in a spur of urbanistic concern, had it moved, and remodeled the square to its present pattern.

Today, with its languid fin de siècle aspect, the Plaza Bolívar stands as the remnant of a past, long-forgotten in the midst of a booming metropolis. Life seems to slumber into lethargy under the shade of its now century-old trees, lulled by the gushing sound of water running from its two fountains. The Plaza lives a life of its own, unaware of the anachronism it represents. The equestrian statute of Simón Bolívar, The Liberator, stands in the middle of the shaded square. Older men gather around it to read the newspapers, or chat on the problems of the day: it is the hour of the tertulia.

Every Sunday, at dusk, people gather in the square to listen to the Municipal Band play—out of tune—faded melodies of old waltzes and opera overtures.

On Sunday, October 22, 1899, the Plaza showed an unusual display of animation. Flags were waving as on an

official holiday, troops were stationed at random everywhere. Crowds had invaded the square; a mixture of curiosity and impatience could be felt. The band, which was to play all night,¹ suddenly struck the notes of the "Gloria al bravo pueblo," the national anthem. Hats were waved. Cheers. It was shortly after half past six in the evening. Arriving from the Caño Amarillo train station, between a double row of soldiers, amidst a show of uniforms, a long suite of open carriages came to a halt in front of the Casa Amarilla. A little man with a dark beard and fiery eyes waved to the crowd, and climbed down from the first carriage.² Walking with a pair of crutches, he entered the Presidential palace, followed by a disparate pageant of armed and unarmed men, top hats and frock coats, dirty, ragged shirts and straw jipijapas. A moment later, the little man appeared at the balcony, in front of the cheering crowds, and delivered an address, which was printed out and posted two days later; it read:

To the Venezuelans!

Five months ago, our troops, victorious in 'La Popa' and 'Tononó,' led us to predict that the army of the Táchira would march from triumph to triumph to the capital of the Republic: we have vanquished, we have fully avenged the majesty of our institutions and our national pride, sealing forever the shameful process

1. This detail was revealed to me by General Eleazar López Contreras in a talk we had in August 1968. It has also been confirmed in the memoirs of Teodosio Ramón Blanco, Compendio de la Historia Contemporánea de Venezuela, tomo 1 (Caracas: Tipografía Vargas, 1947), p. 46.

2. T. R. Ybarra, Young Man of Caracas (New York: Ives Washburn & Co., 1941), p. 279. Mr. Ybarra was an eyewitness to the scene described.

of our civil wars.

We can say now that the armed campaign is finished, for a Government is now born that will be the rebirth of the Republic, its program being thus summarized:

New men.

New ideals.

New proceedings.

The administrative labour is beginning . . . for which I claim the help of all men of good will. To achieve the program of this Revolution and show before our eyes and those of the world that the heroic sacrifices that have occurred before today, have not occurred in vain, will doubtless be the motto of my government.

Nothing and no one will have me waver from this path; and if, out of disgrace for the Fatherland, Fate decided that, despite my best endeavours to achieve the happiness of all Venezuelans, unjustified and new commotions were to imperil the smooth operations of this administration, I hereby declare, with my inherent sincerity, that I shall succumb in the fight, without deviating one inch from the path of honour and duty.

Soldiers of the Liberal Restoration Army! This is your achievement: you must be proud of it and ready to take good care of it so that you will make yourselves¹ worthy of the high renown you have conquered in History.

This was directed from Cipriano Castro, General in Chief of the Armies of the Republic, Supreme Leader of the Liberal Restoration Revolution and in exercise of the National Executive Power.

1. Cipriano Castro, Documentos, tomo 1 (Caracas: Tipografía J. M. Herrera Irigoyen, 1906), pp. 32-33.

CHAPTER I

THE DIMENSION OF ABSURDITY

" . . . And turning once again to the matter of the Land of Grace, and of the river and lake that I have found there, and a lake so big that it ought to be called a sea rather than a lake, . . . I say that if this river does not proceed from the Garden of Eden itself, and it does proceed from a land of infinite proportions, for beyond the horizon it has not yet been determined, then, I myself am most certain in that here, where I have said, lies the true Garden of Eden, and I am resting upon the reasons and authorities above mentioned."¹

Thus wrote Christopher Columbus, on his third voyage (1498), at the mouths of the Orinoco river, when he first sighted the eastern coasts of what was to become Venezuela.

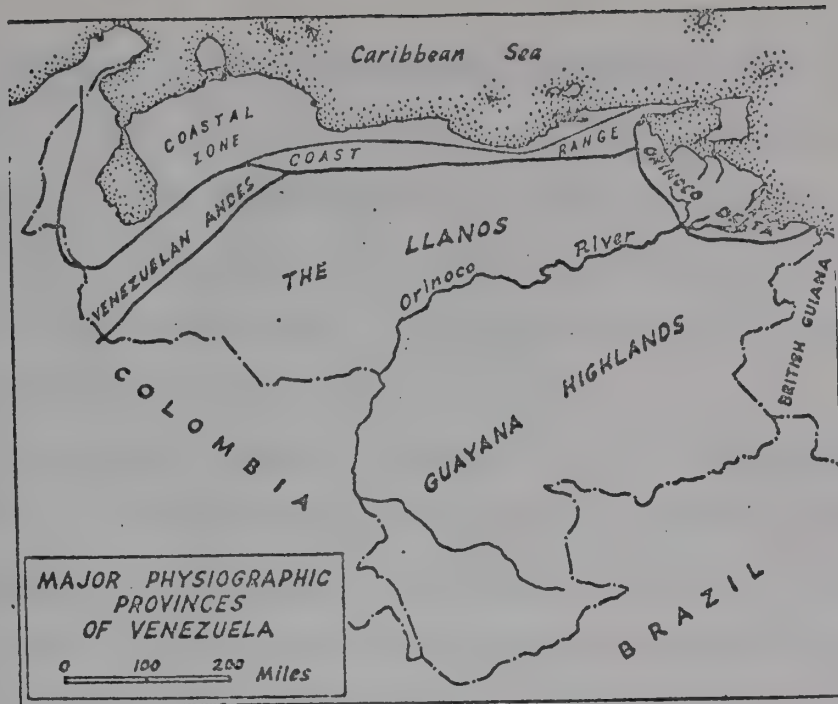
Any traveller, upon arriving to a tropical land, is invariably struck by the overwhelming beauty and profusion of its natural setting. Probably more so than the beauty itself, it is the diversity of landscapes, climates, flora and fauna, within a somewhat limited surface (1,550,000 square kilometers—352,000 square miles), that gives Venezuela a unique position in the American continent.

1. Christopher Columbus, Letter to the Kings of Spain, published by Martín Fernández de Navarrete in his Colección de viajes, tomo I, pp. 391-412, quoted in: Guillermo Morón, Historia de Venezuela (Madrid, 1966), pp. 101-102.

the existence of
This diversity derives from / four main geographical areas. First, a coastal lowland, between the Andes and the Caribbean sea (7% of the total area), narrow at the center, but broadening on both ends to form the Orinoco delta at its eastern extremity and the Maracaibo basin in the west. Then a mountain region (12% of the total area), the northernmost extremity of the Andes cordillera, running from the high peaks of the Sierra Nevada de Mérida (7,000 to 9,000 feet) in the west, to a lower coastal ridge (3,000 feet) that dies out in the delta region. The next area, included between the Andes and the Orinoco river is an immense (36% of the total area) low plain called the llanos, normally flooded during the rainy seasons (April to October) by the rivers' overflow, dry the rest of the year. Finally, from the Orinoco down to the Brazilian border extend the untouched forests of the Guayana highlands (45% of the total area):¹ "spectacular mountain masses [rising] up with their flat tops and vertical sides, the 'tepui' of the Indians, the 'lost world' of H. G. Wells."²

1. Edwin Lieuwen, Venezuela (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 2-9.

2. Guillermo Zuloaga, A Geographical Glimpse of Venezuela (1959), pp. 27-29.



Source: Edwin Lieuwen, Venezuela (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

The Spanish settling of Venezuela was effected in the Colonial Period through the pattern of territorial penetration from the coastal area towards the interior, the llanos and the Guayana region remaining virtually unpopulated.

The omnipresence of a bewitchingly hostile environment confronted the Conquistadores with a permanent struggle for survival. The overwhelming absurdity of such a situation, for nature in a tropical country can never really be domesticated, lends a note of outrageous extravagance to the making of the Latin American man. In a sense, every Latin American is a replica of the mythical José-Arcadio Buendía of Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude,¹ a giant of folly and

1. Gabriel García Márquez, Cien años de soledad (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1969), translated as One Hundred Years of Solitude (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

fantasy, trapped in a closed world, seeking wildly to invent an identity which had been lost in the clash of the two cultures that bore him. The harmonious and eternal balance of the South American aborigine with regard to his natural world disappears with the coming of the Spaniards. The age of Tristes tropiques is initiated.¹

Christopher Columbus thought that he had discovered the Garden of Eden when he first saw the coasts of Venezuela; the Spaniards believed that the mythical Eldorado lay buried in the forests of the Guayana highlands. Dreams that rotted, eaten up by red ants and termites. The fundamental absurdity remained unaltered.

The Colonial Period in Venezuela reached a precarious balance between man and his environment, grounded on a rigid structuring of the society along racial patterns. The situation was systematized by the organization of land tenure, with the institutionalization of the latifundio, the large private landholding, in the hands of a white minority, with the use of black slave labour, and with the establishment of encomiendas, or "the right conceded by royal bounty . . . to receive the tributes . . . of the Indians," who became the landowner's responsibility "for their lifetime and for that

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes tropiques (Paris: Plon, 1969).

of one of their heirs."¹

The obvious abuses of this system generated an acute class-consciousness, particularly among the white American-born (crillo) and coloured (pardo) groups, in opposition to the white Spanish-born (mantuano) controlling minority who monopolized the country's administration. The Wars of Independence (1811 to 1827) initiated a violent process of social, political and economic breakdown which was continued through the ensuing sixty-eight years (1835 to 1903) of endemic civil wars.

The Venezuelan Wars of Independence replaced the sovereignty of the Spanish Crown with the concept of the independent, national State as a self-identifiable social entity. The Capitanía General of Venezuela, as an administrative unit, had had only a short history of its own. Created in 1777 by King Charles the Third, it brought together a

1. Juan Solórzano y Pereira, Política indiana, tomo II (Madrid, 1776), pp. 21-26, as quoted in Federico Brito Figueroa, Historia económica y social de Venezuela, tomo 1 (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1966), p. 76. The word encomienda literally means a "turning over to." The Indians were thus encomendados, "turned over to," the landowner's care. The encomienda system, established in 1545, became in fact a watered-down version of the enslavement of the native Indian population, theoretically protected by law, following the intervention of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas on its behalf, in the early years of the sixteenth century. For further details, see Eduardo Arcila Fariás, El régimen de la Encomienda en Venezuela (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1966). The term latifundio stands of the land itself, whereas the term hacienda designates the land plus the units of exploitation (houses, crops grown, etc. . . .).

diverse set of provinces, separately administered, and nominally under the jurisdiction of either the Vice-Royalty of Nueva Granada (Colombia) or the Audiencia of Santo Domingo. It later became, as part of Bolívar's Grán Colombia scheme, federated with Colombia and Ecuador, until the final split occurred in 1830.

Now, however, the State was nominally the owner of all the land, as national territory. The individual who controlled the State, or exerted pressure upon it, would ultimately obtain a personal leasehold over the land. The interest in the personal exploitation of public lands (tierras baldías; i.e. leasable lands) originated from this new state of affairs.

A redistribution of wealth and power immediately took place. "The colonial latifundio was transferred without any sort of modification to the hands of the new leaders, . . . who had entered the war without any kind of personal fortune, and now found themselves to be the wealthiest landowners in the country."¹ The extension of the latifundio, through the purchase of tierras baldías, was a process that was continued

1. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, Cesarismo Democrático (Caracas: Garrido, 1952), pp. 106-107. It is significant that one of Simón Bolívar's first acts as Supreme Chief of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of Venezuela and Nueva Granada was to enact, in October 1817, a decree on the distribution of confiscated real-estate. This decree was confirmed by the Angostura Congress of 1821 and by the Grán Colombia Congress of the same year. The texts of the 1817 decree and the 1821 law can be found in Brito Figueroa, op. cit., pp. 207-209 and 210-215.

throughout the nineteenth century and culminated in the first decades of the twentieth.¹ This crystallization and extension of private landownership accounted for the development of regional caudillism, or the control of a particular area by a self-appointed and politically conscious individual, a phenomenon that the difficulties of communication between regions helped to maintain.

If the new national principle of fatherland, patria, was readily accepted, its corollary of administrative centralism was rejected as the potential encroachment of a rival sovereignty. The caudillo, the local leader, the product of a feudal type of social contract between him and those that lent their allegiance to him, remained the major source of influence in his province, the authority. Not all caudillos were large landowners; all of them, however, were assimilated to a particular region.²

This feudalization of the land led to a feudalization of labour, and to the same class antagonisms that prevailed in the Colonial Period.³ The momentum for social upheaval

1. See the tables included in Miguel Acosta Saignez, Latifundio (Mexico: Editorial Popular, 1937), pp. 54-56.

2. See Charles C. Griffin, "Regionalism's Role in Venezuelan Politics," Inter-American Quarterly, vol. 3, No. 4 (October 1941). A valuable study is also that of Robert L. Gilmore, Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, 1810-1910 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1964).

3. The abolition of slavery in 1854 did not represent a change of transcendental importance. See Brito Figueroa, op. cit., pp. 246-247.

that resulted from the Wars of Independence was continued on similar terms. The white oligarchy was slowly eroded and replaced by the racially mixed elements of the population.¹ A new class-pyramid was evolving, from its base upward.

The idea of Federation, or the administrative autonomy of the country's various regions, then emerged as the political solution to the realities of caudillism and land tenure.² In theory, Federalism was the only logical outcome. It then came to stand as the label for an entire body of doctrine: liberal precepts of equality, federal autonomy, the separation of Church and State, the submission of the former to the authority of the latter, and personal guarantees of the citizen's rights, over which the country found itself apparently divided between liberals, liberales, who supported the doctrine and conservatives, or godos, who opposed it.³ On the other hand, there were the "facts,

1. Between 1810 and 1825, the Venezuelan population decreased from 802,000 inhabitants, to 659,000, the mantuano class (see p. 5) being literally wiped out. See the tables in Nicolás Veloz Goiticoa, Handbook of Venezuela (Washington: Bureau of American Republics, 1904), p. 14.

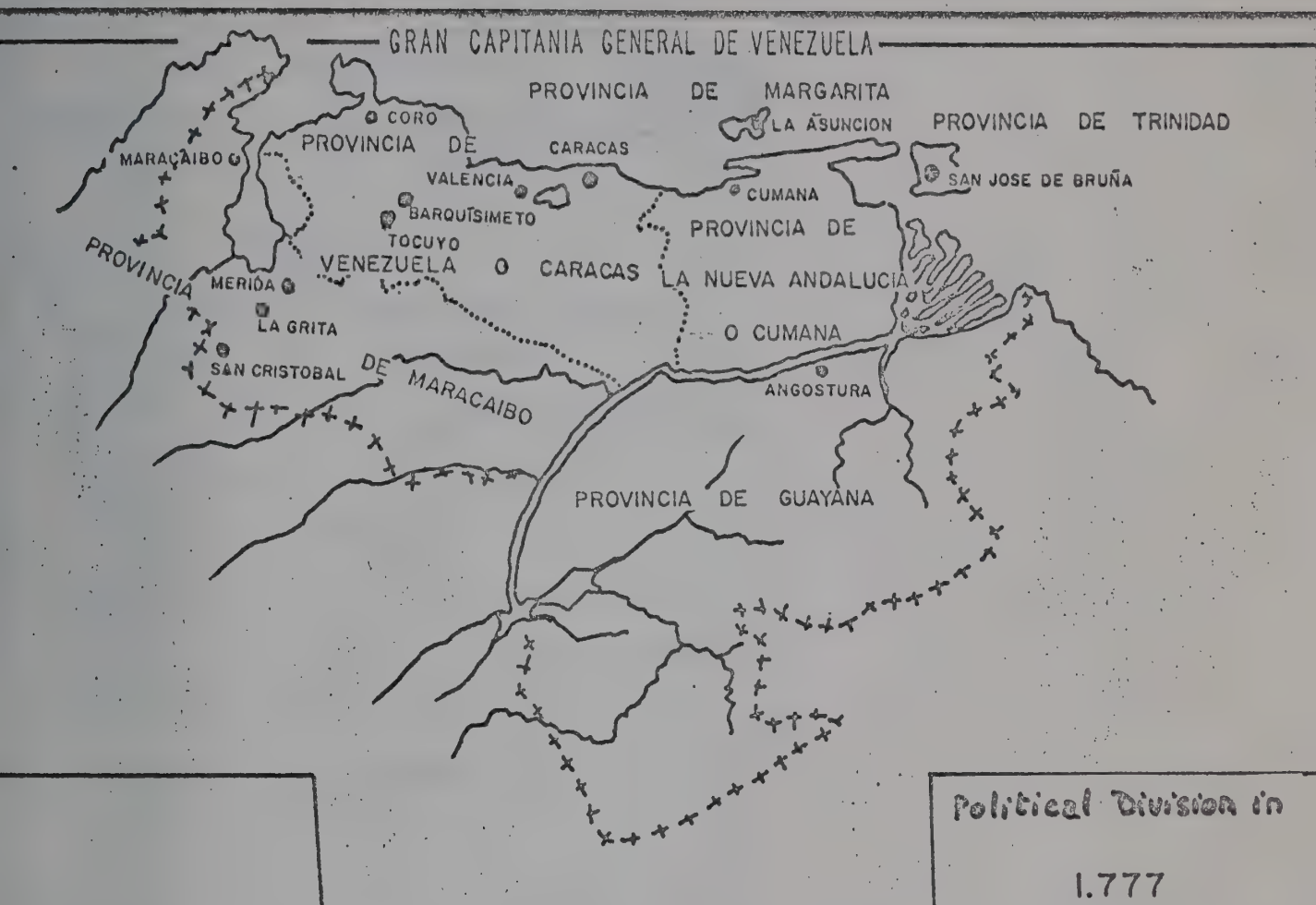
2. This notion of decentralizing, autonomist federalism was present at the origin of the independence movement in 1811, and was reiterated throughout the nineteenth century as the answer to a liberal idea of government.

3. The term godo was derived from the name of Manuel Godoy, King Charles the Fourth's despised favorite, and was applied, during the independence period, to those who supported the Spanish Cause.

proved a thousand times, that there had never been a single Venezuelan who had ever even thought of proclaiming principles contrary to those set forth in the liberal constitutions governing the Republic, thus belying the belief that at any given time two parties with opposing political principles stood against one another."¹

The facts also showed that provincial autonomy was constantly curbed by the absolute and arbitrary control that any caudillo, upon seizing power, set out to exert over the entire country. This obvious discrepancy between the ends proclaimed and the means used stood at the origin of the constitutional and conceptual absurdity of Venezuela's political evolution throughout the nineteenth century. A political framework had simply become the convenient justification for all possible abuses. Dreams of constitutional grandeur were lost in the chaos of conflicting ambitions, in the unchallenged dimension of absurdity.

1. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, "Godos y Liberales," unpublished study, written in 1902, p. 1., Vallenilla Lanz Archives, Paris.



Source : 150 Años de Vida Republicana, tomo 2
(Caracas : Presidencia de la República, 1963).



The names in parentheses correspond to the changes enacted by the 1891 Constitution.

Source: T. L.

CHAPTER II

THE MYTH OF CONSTITUTIONAL LEGALISM

One of the major contradictions encountered in a study of Venezuelan, and, for that matter, of Latin American history, is the parallel development of two radically opposed currents: a civilian-based, legalist tradition built on centuries of legislative tabulation and institutional organization;¹ and the tradition of violence, that is, caudillism.

The Wars of Independence witnessed the first major confrontation of these two trends. At the origin, the constitutionalist legalist doctrine of government was the product of men who believed in it and sought to abide by its principles, like Simón Bolívar, The Liberator, Pedro Gual, who was called "the First Diplomat of the New World,"² Santos Michelena, the organizer of Venezuela's treasury after 1830, "the purest symbol of the civic virtues of his time,"³ or the scientist Doctor José María Vargas, Venezuela's second President. Imbued with the optimistic tradition of the Enlightenment, as exemplified in the French Revolutionary spirit of 1789, they attempted to create a perennial basis for their ideal of a new state.

1. This thesis is presented in the work of Professor Augusto Mijares, La interpretación pesimista de la sociología hispanoamericana (Madrid: Afrodisio Aguado, 1952).

2. See Harold A. Bierck, La vida pública de Don Pedro Gual (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1948).

3. Ramón Armando Rodríguez, Diccionario biográfico, geográfico e histórico de Venezuela (Madrid: 1957), p. 468.

Yet, next to the figure of Simón Bolívar, himself not immune from arbitrary decisions, stood that of José Antonio Páez, who led the horse-riding inhabitants of the llano lowlands, the llaneros, to pillage, loot and rape. Brute force prevailed in the end. Vargas remained in power for only a year (1834-1835) and was overthrown. "Dr. Vargas, the triumphant fait accompli is its own law," to which he answered: "I am a President by law and do not bow down to triumphant faits accomplis."¹

From then on the line between these two traditions was constantly crossed. The caudillo would simply borrow the rhetoric of the constitutional jurist, and thereby render it factually meaningless. What had once been an intended social reality became a political myth.

Similarly, the line between civilian and military, in nineteenth century Venezuela, was blurred. The military did not represent a well-defined trained corps as it does today. There existed no professional army in the modern sense. An attempt to create an equivalent of the French officer-engineer training school, the École Polytechnique, was embodied in the short lived Military Academy of Mathematics, which existed in Caracas between 1830 and 1879, as part of the University. The total enrollment, though, never exceeded one

1. Laureano Villanueva, Biografía del Doctor Vargas, reproduced in Francisco González Guinán, Historia contemporánea de Venezuela, tomo II (Caracas: El Cojo, 1909), p. 397.

hundred students.¹ Regular conscription was carried out in the form of recluta, the forceful recruiting amongst the lower strata of the population for the immediate purpose of waging war. This "army," devoid of training, equipment and purpose was essentially a pitiful amalgamate of wretched tatterdemalions, geared to serve the interests of a given leader.

In the absence of an established hierarchical basis for command, the most significant factor of authority was the leader's own personality. The caudillo was a man of who created his own prestige, a man / name. In a nation where over half of the recorded childbirths were illegitimate,² the mere fact of possessing a traceable family line was a wager of higher social achievement. This notion of family filiation was similar in pattern to the Roman principle of gens, or the Semitic tradition of tribe: "the son of the son of"

But the caudillo created his own origin, his own gens; however ephemeral. His personal prestige was linked to his qualities as vir, strong man: qualities of action, of manhood,

1. Martín García Villasmil, Escuelas para formación de oficiales del ejercito, 1810-1964 (Caracas, 1964), pp. 44-89.

2. A comparative consultation of population tabulations in the Boletín de Estadística de los Estados Unidos de Venezuela, referred to a Boletín de Estadística, for the years 1904-1908. Two examples. In the fourth trimester of 1904, in the Trujillo district of the Trujillo state, 181 out of the total of 302 births were reported as illegitimate. Boletín de Estadística, Año I, no. 1, p. 272. In the second trimester of 1905, in the Maracaibo district of the Zulia state, 266 out of the total of 480 births were likewise reported as illegitimate. Boletín de Estadística, Año I, no. 3, p. 12.

summed up in the Spanish word machismo, that found their outcome in a process of violent self-assertion which served as its own justification. The caudillo vir superseded the caudillo civis, or the caudillo as citizen, because his own societal determination, in most cases a low one, spurred his ambition to match ^{by achievement} his sense of self-pride.

The "soldiers" followed their leader, their "General," identified themselves with him, died without ever being aware of what they were fighting for.¹ Yet, this pattern of uprisings, revolutionary proclamations, prison, exiles, often seen under the false glamour of a ridiculous operetta, was, for nineteenth century Venezuela, one of the fundamental factors of class-mobility. The significance of caudillo politics, though derived from personal ambitions, always remained primarily social.²

This political personalism was reflected in the country's institutions. It has been said that every law in Venezuela could be tracked down to the vested interests of a particular name and a particular surname.³ In

1. See Carlos Siso, La formación del pueblo Venezolano, tomo 2 (Caracas, 1951).

2. See Eric R. Wolf and Edward C. Hansen, "Caudillo Politics: A Structural Analysis," Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. IX, no. 2 (The Hague, January 1967). William S. Stokes in his "Violence as a Power Factor in Latin American Politics," Western Political Quarterly, Vol. V (September 1952) classifies these different forms of upheaval in Latin American politics. According to his model, the caudillo uprising falls under the category of "machetismo," a term, to this author's knowledge, invented by Mr. Stokes.

3. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, as President of the Senate in 1923, is generally credited for this mot.

a society, small in number, limited in its possibilities of communication between regions or with the outside world, politics were reduced to a recurrent set of familiar faces. The Spanish noun compadre, so widely used, particularly in the rural areas, to define personal contact between two individuals, has been inaccurately translated by the English "friend," or "fellow." There was more to it. When applied to the caudillo and his followers, it emphasized the crucial influence of personal contact and acknowledged the purely subjective grounding of the individual's social role ⁱⁿ /a quasi-religious sense of brotherhood and complicity in action.¹

In 1864, following four years of a generalized civil turmoil, called the Federal Wars (1859-1863),² a constitution was proclaimed, the liberal model that conditioned the political development of Venezuela for the following fifty years, and, in some ways, still conditions it today.

The Federal Wars had achieved, in theory at least, the complete levelling of Venezuelan society. The oligarchic privileges that had remained after the Wars of Independence, like the possession of a capital of at least twenty thousand

1. Literally, "compadre" designates the godfather of one's child.

2. For a detailed study of the Federal Wars, see José Santiago Rodríguez, Contribución al estudio de la Revolución Federal en Venezuela, 2 vols. (Caracas: Editorial "Elite," 1933).

pesos--four thousand dollars--to be able to cast a vote,¹ had been abolished. Four years of merciless bloodshed ended with a document that was, given its historical context, hopelessly ahead of its time.

The Constitution of 1864 consecrated the principle of political Federalism. Venezuela was divided into twenty independent states, united to form a free and sovereign nation: the United States of Venezuela.² Under the heading of Article 14, the Nation guaranteed its citizens:

1. Inviolability of life; the death penalty being abolished.³
5. Personal freedom, thereby abolishing forceful recruiting for military service, as well as slavery.
6. Freedom of thought, expressed by word or through the press, without any restriction whatsoever.
11. Freedom of suffrage in popular elections, the only restriction being the necessity to be eighteen, or over, in order to vote.⁴
12. Freedom to teach, the Public Domain taking upon itself the obligation of establishing free elementary education.
13. Freedom of worship, the Roman Catholic Church being the only one enabled to carry ceremonies outside of a defined place of worship.

1. Constitution of 1857, Article 15, Paragraph 1, reproduced in Luis Mariñas Otero (Comp.). Las constituciones de Venezuela (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1965), p. 259.

2. These twenty states were: Apure, Aragua, Barcelona, Barinas, Barquisimeto, Carabobo, Caracas, Cojedes, Coro, Cumaná, Guárico, Guayana, Maracaibo, Maturín, Mérida, Margarita, Portuguesa, Táchira, Trujillo and Yaracuy. With several name changes, and several minor territorial modifications, this is basically the division today.

3. The death penalty has remained abolished to the present.

4. This universal suffrage was all-male. Women got the vote only in 1936.

14. Full equality, in virtue of which 1) all must be judged under the same laws and subjected to the same duties, services and contributions; 2) no nobility titles or other hereditary distinctions could be conferred, 3) the only official title given to public officials being that of Citizen and You (formal).¹

A Supreme Court was instituted, and a bicameral system maintained, the mode of election of the representatives, one deputy for every twenty-five thousand inhabitants and two senators per state, being left to the discretion of the different states. The President of the Republic was to be elected by universal secret ballot for a non-renewable four-year term.²

In strictly constitutionalist terms, the 1864 document obviously set the bases for a confederation, rather than for a federation proper. It/^{stated} contrasting principles of socialized welfare: a free elementary school system with resolutions of a pure laissez faire economic policy: "the Nation shall guarantee a full freedom of endeavour and, in consequence, the full property of the materials discovered or produced."³ Its generous purposes, extending far beyond the practices of its day-- as in the granting of the so-called "youth vote," or in declaring

1. This practice is still in use. The President of the Republic is referred to as the "Citizen President." Also, all official documents were to be dated in reference to the year 1859, first of the Federation, as well as to the year 1810, first of the Independence and carry the mention "Dios y Federaci3n" --"God and Federation."

2. Articles 1, 14, 18, 19, 20 and 63, Constitution of 1864, in Mariñas Otero, op. cit.; pp. 303-323.

3. Article 14, Paragraph 8, Constitution of 1864, in Ibid., p. 306. Throughout the nineteenth century, the universal belief in Manchesterian libertarianism constituted the vague creed for Venezuela's political economy. Works of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill were widely read.

that "civil and military authority could never be exerted by the same person, or group of persons,"¹ that "armed forces could not deliberate but were to remain passive and obedient,"² or that "neither the National Executive nor that of the different States could interfere in the domestic conflicts of a particular State,"³ were forgotten in the political anarchy and military despotism that continued to sweep, in successive waves, the ruins of a legalistic dream.

In 1867, before Congress, Antonio Leocadio Guzmán, one of the chief exponents of the liberal autonomist doctrine, cynically admitted: "I do not know where they have invented that the Venezuelan people love the federation, when they do not even know what the word means. I myself, with several others, . . . created it. We reckoned: since every revolution needs a rallying banner, why not call that idea forth? If the opposing party had used the word federation, we would have said centralism."⁴

A personalistic pattern of political behaviour, as the name indicated, could lend allegiance only to a single, undivided source of authority, indulging in a personality

1. Ibid., Article 97.

2. Ibid., Article 116.

3. Ibid., Article 101.

4. Antonio Leocadio Guzmán, as quoted in Lisandro Alvarado, Historia de la Revolución Federal en Venezuela (Caracas: Litografía y Tipografía del Comercio, 1909), p. 537.

cult that often reached heights of adulation, readily matched by a corresponding megalomania. The political pluralism, presupposed by the 1864 Constitution, was lost in the personal authority of a single head of State.

The Federal Wars saw the Venezuelan masses rise in arms against social privileges, economic exploitation and the remnants of racial discrimination. The white man and the landlord were, indeed, synonymous. In the words of Ezequiel Zamora, the popular leader of the revolution, a Venezuelan Gracchus Babeuf, "there would be no more rich, no more poor, no more slaves, no more masters, no more underdogs, only brother men who could treat one another without ever having to bow their heads."¹ These revolutionary principles of utopian socialism, of anarchism even,² were intended to find their outcome in an equal distribution of land and the end of all class differences.

In four years, 350,000 people were massacred,³ and Venezuela's upper classes were liquidated in "a frantic attempt to end all that meant a just or unjust hierarchy,

1. Ezequiel Zamora, as quoted in Brito Figueroa, op. cit., p. 322.

2. There is evidence to suggest that the writings of socialist utopians like Fourier, Saint-Simon and Proudhon did influence some of the leaders of the 1858-1863 revolution. Research is currently pursued in that field by Professor Brito Figueroa, who has come across several references indicating that, at that time, minor leaders of the French 1848 Revolution were politically active in Venezuela.

3. From an analysis of the population tables in Veloz Goiticoa, Handbook of Venezuela, op. cit., p. 14.

from the wealth of the rich and the property of the landowners, to the hatred that the more savage guerrilleros proclaimed against all white men, and all those who knew how to read and write."¹ However, the facts were that at the end of the Federal Wars, a set of caudillos had been replaced by another one. The land, expropriated from individuals or institutions like the Catholic Church, was taken over by the new leaders. The latifundio was expanded. In 1891, 1,184 individuals controlled 14,184 square miles out of the total of 19,184 square miles of privately owned land.² The officially sanctioned autonomy of the provinces, by increasing the nominal power of the local leaders, increased local despotism and exploitation. "De facto governments succeeded one another, uninterrupted; and whenever talks were held on laws or proclamations were issued, affirming liberal principles, the results served only to falsify and downgrade both the laws and the principles, further removing the masses from any effective practice of citizenship."³

1. Arturo Uslar Pietri, article written in El Nacional, Caracas, February 20, 1959, quoted in Brito Figueroa, op. cit., p. 324.

2. Brito Figueroa, table reproduced in Ibid., p. 896. It is impossible to ascertain the direct effects of the Federal Wars on the landholding crystallization for the records kept immediately prior to 1859 were burned by the revolutionists. It must be pointed out that this privately owned land accounted for only about one third of Venezuela's total agricultural area, estimated for that period at about 349,000 kilometers--71,000 square miles. Veloz Goiticoa, op. cit., p. 147.

3. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, "Notes written in the margin of a proclamation by General Castro, July 5, 1902," Vallenilla Lanz Archives, Paris.

And the myth of constitutional legalism prevailed, nurtured by the rhetoric of men who set out to defend liberties that did not exist except on a piece of paper. Johan Huizinga, in his classical masterpiece The Waning of the Middle Ages¹ describes how the rule of courtly knighthood was gradually reduced to a ceremonial that bore no further significance other than its elaborate glamour. Similarly, the glamour of Venezuelan politics in the nineteenth century was gradually removed from the social reality it had sought to enhance in earnest. Political rhetoric was a ritual that, at first, everyone conformed to, without even being aware of the prevailing contradiction between the word and actuality.

A process that, in the case of the European Middle Ages, lasted several centuries, took only several decades in tropical Venezuela. This acceleration of an historical process is a true Latin American phenomenon, which enables an encompassed study to cover a short span of time. Such a concentration, however, while facilitating a ready grasp of the whole, also renders its parts more difficult to discern and analyze.

1. Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1954).

CHAPTER III

GUZMÁN BLANCO AND HIS TIME

From 1870 to 1888, the Venezuelan political scene was dominated by the figure of General Antonio Guzmán Blanco, the son of Antonio Leocadio Guzmán. Guzmán Blanco, like his father, with whom he shared part of his public career, possessed a keen sense of both the men and the circumstances that surrounded him.

He held a degree in Law, and had spent several years abroad, in the United States and France. Politically sophisticated, shrewd and opportunist, implacably lucid, he stood as the nineteenth century Venezuelan caudillo par excellence.¹

Guzmán Blanco was perfectly aware of the political myth that men like his father had helped to create. "Certainly," he acknowledged, "in any previously constituted state, a federal regime may be adopted, like so many other inoperative institutions, however--as may be seen in the case of Venezuela--what was thought to be a magical formula that would solve all the country's problems, only served to worsen and complicate them, and create new ones, while the federal mechanism of government never really operated at any given time."²

The young Guzmán Blanco, he was thirty-seven years old, headed, ad interim, the Federal government from November 1864

1. See George S. Wise's study Caudillo: A Portrait of Antonio Guzmán Blanco (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).

2. As quoted in Ramon Díaz Sánchez, Guzmán: Eclipse de una ambición de poder (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1950), p. 438.

to May 1866, was ousted by a reaction, left for Paris, returned to Venezuela in June 1868, only to flee again, two months later, into exile.

He consciously exploited the liberal syndrome, as it conveniently suited his own purposes. Upon seizing power, in April 1870, after a successful military comeback, he revived the crumbling Liberal Party and built it into a powerful and docile political machine, the Grán Partido Liberal Amarillo, that was to run up to the century's close.

Guzmán Blanco managed to reshape the image of Venezuela's recent history. According to his picture, the liberal heritage of the Independence and Federation, won at such a cost, was constantly threatened by the evil scheming godos who were still plotting in the dark. For eighteen years, from 1870 to 1888, the night-watchers who walked the streets of Caracas, giving the time every hour, half and quarter, would end their cry by shouting: "¡Mueran los godos!" "Death to the godos!"¹ A proceeding worthy of Cato's "Delenda est Cartago."

To help his "public enemy" diversion, Guzmán Blanco recreated for the popular mind the epic of the Venezuelan Wars of Independence and their hero, Simón Bolívar, who had been previously ignored and vilipended, and was now redrawn in

1. Evidence from the author's own family recollections.

almost superhuman forms.¹ The Bolivarian cult created a set of historical values that served the Guzmancista cause.

This distortion of history found one of its manifestations in a spectacular anticlerical campaign. The Church, which, since the Independence, had not had any significant political influence² in Venezuela, was identified as a pillar of the godo conservative reaction.

In 1872, all seminaries were closed down. In 1873 civil marriage was established as the only institution valid by law. Finally, in 1876, all convents and other religious communities were closed down, and all the remaining Church properties were confiscated.³ Freemasonry, the new scientism, that had existed in Venezuela since the mid-eighteenth century, was not given official sanction. The Great Caracas Lodge was inaugurated in 1876.

Guzmán Blanco has been called Venezuela's "Civilizing Autocrat." He was a multifaceted and enlightened reformer, ^{to be sure} guided by his personal whim, but ^{a leader} who also realized the necessity of transforming agrarian Venezuela into an enterprising nation.

1. It was only after 1870 that Bolívar and his ideals began to be given official tribute. The first major public statue of Bolívar was inaugurated in 1874 and stands in the middle of the square in Caracas that bears his name.

2. See Mary Watters, A History of the Church in Venezuela, 1810-1930 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933).

3. José-Luis Salcedo Bastardo, Historia fundamental de Venezuela (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1970), p. 568.

To that effect, in June 1870, a decree was issued by which laic, compulsory elementary education was instituted. The state-run schools were to be maintained through the levying of a material tax. A small but genuine effort on public instruction had been initiated.¹ At least one of the dreams of the 1864 Constitution was slowly coming true.

To that effect also, order was restored in the chaos of the country's monetary situation. Since 1842, Venezuela had been losing considerable sums, by legalizing the circulation of foreign currencies, like the dollar or the franc,

on an unrealistic table of exchange. This system was abolished in 1879 with the creation of a new single national currency, the Bolívar, indexed on silver, and set at parity with the French franc.²

Venezuela's relative peace during the Guzmancista era marked a time of expansion. Expansion in public works and facilities. An extensive program of roads, aqueducts, etc. . . . was started. Caracas, the capital, was embellished by squares, public gardens, new buildings like the Capitol, and the University.³

Expansion in the country's industrial development.

1. Morón, op. cit., p. 427.

2. Ramón Veloz, Economía y finanzas de Venezuela desde 1830 hasta 1944 (Caracas: Impresores Unidos, 1945), pp. 180-192.

3. Guillermo Morón in Ibid., pp. 425-426 gives a list of the major works carried out during the period.

Small industries, particularly in the textile and leather fields, were opened in several major towns like Caracas and Valencia, or in the major harbours like Maracaibo and Puerto Cabello. These efforts, though, did not go beyond a very elementary manufacturing stage.¹

Expansion in foreign investments, that would stimulate the nation's economic growth. A new factor was thus brought into play. One of the major areas of concentration for these investments was railroad transportation. Six out of Venezuela's eleven major lines were built with foreign capital: four British, one German and one French.²

Probably the two most important ones were the British La Guaira and Caracas Railroad, connecting Caracas to its seaport, twenty-two miles away, and the German Grán Ferrocarril de Venezuela, the country's longest line, connecting Caracas with Valencia.

1. There is evidence to suggest that at this early stage an embryo worker unionization existed. Research is currently pursued in that field by Professor Brito Figueroa. In the 1880's a report was sent by a group of Venezuelan workers to the opening meeting of the Second Internationale in Brussels. In 1896 a first Congress of Venezuelan Workers was convened in Caracas. Almost insignificant in number, this nascent proletariat found no possible outlet for its growing claims. See Salcedo Bastardo, op. cit., pp. 564-565.

2. John C. Rayburn, "Rail Transportation in Venezuela, 1835-1955," Inter-American Economic Affairs, Vol. X (Spring, 1957), p. 23. The other main foreign operated railroads were: the Puerto Cabello and Valencia Railway Company, the Bolívar Railway, connecting Tucacas with the inland town of Barquisimeto, the Central Railway of Venezuela, also connecting Caracas and Valencia via Ocumare del Tuy, and, the French managed Empresa Nacional Ferrocarril y Muelle de Guanta, that connected the coal mines at Neverí in the state of Bermúdez to the port of Guanta, on the coast.

The La Guaira and Caracas Railroad was, reportedly, one of the most successful British investments in Venezuela. It was inaugurated in 1883, at the cost of about \$154,668 per mile,¹ a feat of engineering ability, winding around and through the mountain ridge that separated Caracas from the sea.

The Grán Ferrocarril de Venezuela, inaugurated in 1884, was built by the Grosse Venezuela Eisenbahn Gesellschaft, a joint stock company, with the directors of the powerful Berlin Disconto Gesellschaft and the Norddeutsche Bank of Hamburg helping to administer its affairs. The concession grant was bought by Friedrich Krupp, the Prussian steel magnate, who supplied the rails.²

Pioneering developments also occurred in the mining sector. Gold discoveries in the Guayana region led to the formation of the El Callao Mining Company, organised in 1870, with considerable French and other Continental investment, a total paid up capital of £1,288,000.³ Together with the Quebrada Railway, Land and Copper Company, Limited, the El Callao formed one of the most important British mining investments in Latin America, and accounted for nearly half of Venezuela's total investment value in mining enterprises."⁴

1. Ibid., p. 27.

2. Ibid., p. 41.

3. J. Fred Rippy, British Investments in Latin America (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959), p. 47.

4. Ibid.

The latter half was accounted for, in most part, by asphalt. In 1883, Guzmán Blanco granted Horatio R. Hamilton, an American citizen, a twenty-five year concession for the exclusive exploitation of the asphalt deposits located in the state of Bermúdez, in eastern Venezuela, the country's greatest asphalt producing region, containing one of the world's major natural asphalt deposits.¹

In November, 1885, Hamilton assigned his concession to the New York and Bermúdez Asphalt Company, incorporated under the laws of the state of New York. The owners of the new company issued \$1,000,000 worth of stock and divided it into 10,000 shares of \$100 each. And the new organization began to work.²

Finally, one of the more famous and durable French investments in Venezuela, was the monopoly granted in 1888, to the Compagnie Française des Cables Télégraphiques, 38 Avenue de l'Opéra, in Paris, for the international submarine telegraph cable communications between Venezuela and the outside world. In 1895, the privilege was extended to include coastal cable communications between the country's major sea ports.³

1. John C. Rayburn, "United States Investments in Venezuelan Asphalt," Inter-American Economic Affairs, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1953-54), p. 26.

2. Ibid., p. 27.

3. Venezuela y la Compañía Francesa de Cables Telegráficos (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1905), p. 72.

On a full Latin American scale, however, the sum of these investments remained small. By 1913, with \$41,350,000, Venezuela represented only .83% of all British investments in the area,¹ and, with a grand total of \$6,500,000, ranked close to last on the list of Latin American countries harbouring United States private capital.² With its often adverse natural conditions, and, above all, because of its chronic disorders, the real Venezuela was not the easy money-making wonderland it was too readily thought to be, a new Eldorado, which often led to frustration or to some financial swindle, like in the case of that Société des Caoutchoucs de l'Orénoque, that had set out on paper and in the mind of a French banker, Monsieur Gérard Carreau, to exploit rubber tree plantations in the Upper Orinoco region.³

On a Venezuelan scale, the importance of the foreign investments lay not so much in their quantity, nor in their direct effects--with regard to the country's total export trade, the asphalt production did not account for more than 3%⁴--but rather in their specific fields of operation. On

1. William P. Glade, The Latin American Economies (New York: American Book, 1969), Table p. 220.

2. Ibid., table p. 222. Out of those \$6.5 million, \$5.0 million were invested in asphalt, \$1.0 million were invested in agriculture and \$0.5 million were invested in public utilities, being in substance an electrical plant outside Caracas.

3. France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Section des Archives, "Venezuela: Industrie, travaux publics, navigation," Relations diplomatiques 1900-1918, vol. 19, pp. 7-11, Quai d'Orsay Archives, Paris. France actually did have genuine investments in Venezuela's rubber plantations.

4. See the representative diagram in Appendix V.

the one hand, the improvement of railway and telegraph communication between regions, however limited,¹ was a factor of great political relevance. On the other hand, more importantly, the foreign presence in Venezuela was felt in the country's foreign debt and the structure of its foreign trade. Venezuela's foreign debt had originated in a series of international loans that had been negotiated during the nineteenth century, particularly with England, through trading-houses or, later, through banks, like the Baring Brothers of London.² To these loans were added the claims of foreign residents over property damaged in the course of the country's internal wars.³ Debt bonds were issued and quoted on the London Stock Exchange, which indeed had bought part of the debt itself between 1881 and 1886, at only 42.85 percent of their nominal value. This accounted pretty much for the unwholesomeness of the transaction.⁴ By 1886, the total value of the debt reached 67,686,412 Bolivars--13,537,285 dollars--compounding a yearly 3^o/_o interest.⁵

1. The total mileage of rail was only about three hundred miles. The Venezuelan railways never achieved a coherent pattern of regional penetration. They were merely attempts that were not carried through. See the map in Appendix I.

2. For details on these negotiations see Edward B. Eastwick, Venezuela (London: Chapman and Hall, 1868), Chapter XIV.

3. Manuel Landacta Rosales, Grán recopilación geográfica histórica y estadística de Venezuela (Caracas: Banco Central de Venezuela, 1967), tomo II, p. 212.

4. Ibid., p. 213.

5. Ibid.

In 1888, an agreement was signed, in Paris, consolidating both the foreign and domestic debts. The latter had also originated during the nineteenth century as a result of the civil war damage reimbursements, the indemnities paid to former slave owners and other military gratifications.¹

In 1896, Germany appeared in the forefront among Venezuela's creditors as a new 5% interest loan in the amount of fifty million bolívars--ten million dollars-- was negotiated with the Disconto Gesellschaft of Berlin, primarily to pay the German railroad companies, under the guarantees offered by a law that was passed in 1886.² The fact that Venezuela's development resulted in the sharpening of this Damoclean sword shed light on the ills of the country's economic structure.

The Guzmán Blanco era corresponded to the time when Venezuela resolutely shifted its production to the monoculture of coffee, a "coffee fever" that drove the other traditional products, cacao and hides, into the background. As an exporter of agricultural goods, Venezuela was at a definite disadvantage with regard to the industrializing nations of Western Europe, Great Britain, France and Germany and, to a lesser degree, Holland and Italy, and with respect to the rising United States. Tables for the pre-1914 period show that even though the position of the United States was important in Venezuelan trade, particularly as an outlet for the country's exports, it was not preponderant. Great Britain, Germany and France

1. Ibid.

2. Venezuela, Department of Finance, Historical Sketch of the Fiscal Life of Venezuela (Caracas: Tipografía Vargas, 1924), p. 54.

actively participated in the country's exchanges, particularly in its imports.¹ Great Britain supplied iron and coal, France specialized in articles of consumption, Germany sent machines and cement.²

These exchanges between Venezuela and the outside world were conducted through foreign trading houses that represented the interests of their respective mother countries. Most important among these were the German, like Blohm and Co., Breüer Möller and Co., Wiese and Co., etc., . . . and the British, like Henry Lord Boulton and Co., Michel de Lemos & Co., etc., . . . Guzmán Blanco's generous policy of concessions further facilitated such a state of affairs. In 1885, the La Guaira Corporation, a British concern, took over the management of La Guaira, the country's major harbour.³

With their headquarters in the major ports and their agencies throughout the interior, these trading houses offered financing facilities to the coffee growing or cattle-raising landowners, either in money or in manufactured articles. They would then purchase the crop, or the hides, at a price fixed in relation to the world market demand. The trading houses thereby exercised a virtual control over the price of a particular product, while the landowner soon became hopelessly indebted. The extension of the latifundio in the nineteenth

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1. See the charts in Appendices II and III.
 2. Landaeta Rosales, op. cit., pp. 197-98.
 3. Veloz Goiticoa, op. cit., p. 463.

century, paradoxically, only served to increase the

inefficiency with which land and labour were used.¹

A tripolar pattern thus characterized Venezuela's economic life. On the coasts, the marginal foreign traders² absorbed and sifted the country's real wealth and formed the middle link between ^{on the one hand} the landowner in the backlands, the retired caudillo, ^{on the other} gradually ruined, and the foreign powers beyond the ocean, the banks and monopoly trusts of the age of neo-colonial domination.

This class of marginal ^{traders} also grouped native Venezuelans who were involved in financing either through import-export trade, or through the nation's banks. Men like the Eraso brothers, like Carlos Zuloaga, or like Manuel Antonio Matos.

Manuel Antonio Matos was born on January 8, 1847,³ in his father's hacienda, "Campanero," near the port town of Puerto Cabello. His early years were spent there. At the age of twelve, his father sent him to New York to complete his education. When he turned fifteen, in 1862, he arrived in Europe, and stayed there for six crucial formative years, during which he familiarized himself with the business world and practices of his day: Paris, London, Hamburg.

1. See Glade, op. cit., pp. 127-137.

2. A great number of these tradesmen acquired, with time, the status of Venezuelan nationals: the Blohms and the Boultons are the two prime examples. These families, however, were to remain foreign-oriented in their economic interests.

3. Manuel Antonio Matos, Recuerdos (Caracas: Empresa El Cojo, 1927), pp. 8-10.

He returned to Venezuela in 1868, and started a small trading house in La Guaira. In October 1875, he married María Ibarra, the sister of President Guzmán Blanco's wife. His social position, quite honourable from the start, was boosted by the marriage, by ^{reason of} its obvious political advantages and also because the Ibarras were one of the country's leading patrician families.¹

Matos, who was later given the rank of "General" by his presidential brother-in-law, was the epitome of the Latin American international gentleman-financier. Well educated, though his education had been primarily a practical one, fluent in French and English, impeccably dressed by Pyle of London, his train of life was that of a sophisticated man of the world.

He became one of Venezuela's wealthiest men. Minister of Finance on three occasions, he was, at the turn of the century, President of the Banco de Caracas, one of the country's major banks, while his sister's husband, Martín H. Pérez, was President of the rival Banco de Venezuela.² He maintained close contacts with the major European banks where his credit was honoured and his name respected. In Venezuela, his political influence was immense, similar to that of those bankers of the Italian Quattrocento, who were called upon to bring remedy

1. Evidence from the author's own family recollections.

2. E. H. Plumacher, "Banks in Venezuela," United States, Consular Reports, Vol. 62, No. 232 (October 4, 1899), pp. 56-58.

to the State's bankruptcy, in exchange of honours and rewards.¹ Self-assured and arrogant, Matos, a capable financier, was the Latin American emulator of the European aristocracy of Rothschilds, Foulds and Péreires, a pretention often obscured by unreasoned vanity and petulance.²

The Guzmán Blanco era, with its outward image of elegant stability and economic development, consecrated the principle of the political fortune. Guzmán Blanco himself candidly stocked huge sums, and spent them lavishly in the Paris of the Belle Epoque.³ His practice was systematized with varying ability. The wealthy South American had become the common feature of Offenbach's La Vie Parisienne.

Paris, j'é viens pour que tou mé voles
Tout ce que là-bas j'ai volé.

Paris, I come so that you can steal from me
All that which I have stolen over there.

1. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, "Bibliografía," p. 2, comments on Manuel Antonio Matos' book of memoirs, Notas. Vallenilla Lanz Archives, Paris.

2. Jacinto López, El Opressor y el Libertador, Castro y Matos (New York: Editorial "Las Novedades," 1912), p. 5.

3. For details on Guzmán Blanco's methods of accumulation, see Wise, op. cit., pp. 145-160.

CHAPTER IV

GUZMÁN BLANCO'S LEGACY

Throughout his years of direct or indirect, constitutional or "provisional" rule, Guzmán Blanco manipulated Venezuela's institutions with utter disregard for any kind of established legal pattern.

A constitutional reform, proposed in 1873, was enacted the following year, by virtue of which, apart from several name changes among the twenty states of the union, the presidential term in office was reduced to two years, non-renewable within the four years following its conclusion. The term for senators, House representatives and Supreme Court Justices was also reduced to two years. Finally, even though it remained universal, suffrage was now made compulsory and was to be carried out through public written ballots,¹ a convenient way to know who voted for whom. Elections held in 1873, on the terms of the new Constitution, showed an amazing display of unanimity: 239,691 votes for Guzmán Blanco, 9 and 6 votes respectively for his other two opponents.²

A major reform occurred in 1881, which illustrated Guzmán Blanco's cynical understanding of Venezuela's political reality. The new constitution reduced the number of autonomous states, as defined in 1864, to nine major territorial entities: the Grandes Estados,³ an image truer to the country's

1. Constitution of 1874, in Mariñas Otero, op. cit., pp. 325-345.

2. Wise, op. cit., p. 91.

3. Constitution of 1881, Article I, in Mariñas Otero, Ibid., pp. 347-348. The nine Grandes Estados were: Estado de Oriente, Estado Guzmán Blanco, Estado Carabobo, Estado Norte de Occidente, Estado Sur de Occidente, Estado de Los Andes, Estado Bolívar, Estado Falcon, Estado Zulia.

de facto centralism. The President would now be elected from within and by a Federal Council of nineteen members (nine senators, nine representatives, plus one additional representative for the Federal District of Caracas) elected, in turn, by Congress for a non-renewable two year-term, paralleling that of the presidency.¹ This idea of Federal Council, which he had taken from the Swiss constitution of 1874, allowed Guzmán Blanco to operate an easier control over a democratic framework that might have proved otherwise unpredictable.

Even though he was not, originally, a member of the Federal Council, the new body elected him "unanimously" to serve a new term as president, from 1882 to 1884. With the official sanction of a reduced autonomy of the states and the establishment of a term of office that hampered the development of any long-lasting administrative program, Guzmán Blanco had created a bone of contention that would serve to justify future reforms, and reactions against them, in the name of constitutionality.

In 1882, a law was passed that set up a thirty per cent additional tax on merchandise from the Antilles, particularly from the British island of Trinidad. Through this measure of future lasting consequences, Guzman Blanco revenged

1. Constitution of 1881, Title V, Articles 61 and 62, in Mariñas Otero, op. cit., p. 359.

himself on those islands, which he considered hot beds of political discontent against his regime.¹ An immediate consequence was a widespread use of smuggling.

In 1884, Guzmán Blanco stepped down from the presidency. He always scrupulously respected the letter, if not the spirit, of the constitutions he enacted. He was called back, two years later, in 1886, by "popular acclamation, and despite his protests," to fulfill a new term. Finally, in 1888, still in full glory, despite signs of a mounting opposition, the "Illustrious American and Regenerator," a title conferred on him fourteen years before, left once again for his hôtel particulier of the rue La Pérouse in Paris, where he continued to direct the affairs of Venezuela from this ideal distance, as he had done in the past.

The successor he had chosen was Dr. Juan Pablo Rojas Paúl, who allowed a greater effectiveness in the functioning of the country's institutions, and paid little attention to the letters he was receiving from Paris. Guzmán Blanco had been caught up in his own constitutional trap. As a popular refrain went:

Rojas Paúl
Mató a Guzmán.
¿Que quieres tú?
Yo quiero pan.

Rojas Paúl
Killed Guzmán.
What do you want?
I want bread.

1. González Guinán, Historia contemporánea, op. cit., tomo XII, pp. 439-440.

Humour and misery. In 1890, Rojas Paúl transmitted his powers to the new President-elect, Dr. Raimundo Andueza Palacio. Guzman Blanco had come to realize that his era was over. He lived in his golden Parisian exile until his death in July 1899.

Andueza Palacio was an amiable man, a gifted orator, inclined to heavy drinking followed by riotous opera singing. Yet, both he and his predecessor seemed to embody a return to a civilian (i.e. non-caudillistic) base of government. Throughout his term, Andueza's main task was to seek a constitutional reform that would not only authorize a four-year presidency, but also allow his own re-election.¹ This self-perpetuation, continuismo, as it was called, was violently attacked by the different factions of the Liberal Party, now split into antagonist groups.

Although Andueza protested his honourable intentions and proclaimed his actual return to the principles of the 1864 Constitution, his attempts at parliamentary manoeuvring dispelled favorable public opinion.² The Constitutional crisis reached its breaking point on February 20, 1892, shortly after the end of Andueza's regular

1. Preliminary grounds for that major reform were laid in the revised 1891 Constitution, that, among other things, changed the denomination of several of the Grandes Estados. These were now; Bermúdez, Miranda, Carabobo, Zamora, Lara, Los Andes, Bolívar, Zulia and Falcon. Mariñas Otero, op. cit., p. 372.

2. For details see Ambrosio Perera, Historia orgánica de Venezuela (Caracas: Editorial Venezuela, 1943), pp. 209-212.

term, when those opposed to his continuismo, the so-called legalists, Legalistas, followed the lead of General Joaquín Crespo and rose in arms.

Joaquín Crespo¹ was born in the Guárico state, in llano lowlands. He had begun his political career, like most of the caudillos of his time, in the Federal Wars. He later followed the rising star of Guzmán Blanco, and became one of the more loyal supporters of the new regime. In 1884, Guzmán Blanco imposed his election by the Federal Council to the presidency of the republic. His two years in office witnessed numerous attempts to have him react against former leader, but to no avail. Powers were smoothly transmitted back to Guzmán Blanco.

Crespo deeply resented the fact that, upon resuming office, Guzmán Blanco set out to blame the labours of the previous administration, and its failure to meet with a serious economic depression that had resulted, primarily, from a drop in world coffee prices. Disenchanted, Crespo retired from public life and withdrew his support of Guzmán Blanco and his regime. The two men were not reconciled.

For his services to the Guzmancista cause, Crespo

1. These subsequent data on Crespo are taken from Manuel Landaeta Rosales, Biografía del Benemerito General Joaquín Crespo (Caracas: Imprenta Bolívar, 1893).

had been called "The Hero of Accomplished Duty." A tall, handsome man, with a dark complexion, thick negroid lips and a warm gaze, also an accomplished horseman,¹ he enjoyed the reputation of a popular leader and a political strong man. He was often called "The Tiger of Santa Inés" (Santa Inés was the name of his house in Caracas).

Crespo started his insurrection against Andueza from his native Guárico province, and quickly drew support from other regions. Fighting spread over the entire country. As an eyewitness reported:

It seems that there has been more fighting for spoils than fighting for glory, and each General, as soon as he collects a few men around him, starts off on a little revolutionary excursion of his own, enforcing loans from inoffensive merchants, and then, running away and leaving his army in the field,² while he enjoys the fruits of his rapine and plunder.

By mid-June, Andueza fled into exile. Total anarchy nearly ensued. The Congress, which had been regularly meeting, declared itself in favor of the revolution, and then decided to dissolve.³ The presidency was provisionally occupied by the old Dr. Guillermo Tell Villegas who, in turn, resigned at the end of August in favor of his own son, Dr. Guillermo Tell Villegas Pulido. Meanwhile, the government forces were

1. Fernando González, Mi compadre (Barcelona: Editorial Juventud, 1934), p. 53.

2. W. Nephew King in "The Civil War in Venezuela," Harper's Weekly, vol. 36, October 1, 1892, p. 943.

3. Perera, op. cit., pp. 213-214.

placed under the command of a certain General Luciano Mendoza,¹ a veteran of the Federal Wars, who had been involved in nearly all the major upheavals that had occurred in Venezuela in the past thirty years. A warlord who now acted as a virtual dictator.²

Fear ^{arising from} the threats against the lives of its citizens and of other foreign nationals prompted the United States to send three men-of-war off the coasts of Venezuela.³ The port of La Guaira was one of the last governmental positions to fall. After a six month campaign, the "Legalista" Revolution had won its cause. On the evening of October 6, 1892, Crespo entered Caracas and took over the country.⁴

A Constitutional Assembly was convened early the following year. A new constitution was drafted, restoring direct popular suffrage in presidential elections for all those over twenty-one as well as a non-renewable four-year term of office. The territorial division of the republic still remained that of nine major entities, but an opportunity was granted the different states, as defined by the 1864 Constitution, to regain their full autonomy if a two-thirds majority on the matter was obtained in the regional assemblies.⁵ Finally

1. Landaeta Rosales, Biografía, op. cit.

2. Rodríguez, Diccionario, op. cit., p. 460.

3. W. Nephew King, Ibid.

4. Landaeta Rosales, Biografía, op. cit.

5. Constitution of 1893, Article 4, in Mariñas Otero, op. cit., p. 395.

a nine-member Government Council was instituted, a middle link between the executive and legislative powers.¹

The Liberal Party was reorganised and chose Crespo, who had been elected Constitutional President of the Republic for the 1894-98 term, to be its leader. Under the new Crespo administration, an era of relative peace prevailed.

In 1895, Manuel Antonio Matos, who had been Minister of Finance in the last Andueza cabinet, was, again, appointed to the same post. Crespo was well aware that Matos was not one of his partisans and bitterly remembered the embargo that had been placed on his personal property at the end of the "Legalista" Revolution. He believed, however, that, by putting him in such a prominent position, he could also keep an eye on his eventual subversive activities. Matos stayed in office for only a few months, and resigned after a conflict over the use of Government Treasury Bonds brought him in open opposition to Crespo's original decision on the matter.²

1895 was also the year of the diplomatic crisis over Venezuela's eastern border with British Guiana. Doubt or dispute had existed over the boundary line between the two territories for over half a century. The British had con-

1. Ibid., Articles 79 to 89, pp. 411-412.

2. Manuel Antonio Matos, Notas (Caracas, Tipografía Vargas, 1925), pp. 19-57.

sistently refused to have the case arbitrated, arguing that Venezuela, on account of its chronic disorders, was an unsuitable partner for discussion. The gold discoveries in the Venezuelan Guayana region spurred the British to claim large chunks of territory that was undisputedly Venezuelan. Venezuela's appeals for arbitration were heard with increasing concern in the United States.¹

In his annual message of December 1894, President Grover Cleveland declared that "he would renew the efforts . . . made to bring about a restoration of diplomatic relations between the disputants and to induce a reference to arbitration."²

On July 20, 1895, Secretary of State Richard Olney, who had been entrusted with the Venezuelan case upon his accession to the State Department, in the previous month, sent a dispatch to be transmitted to the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. Olney argued that "Great Britain's position deprived Venezuela of her free agency and placed her under virtual duress." The principles of the Monroe doctrine were therefore applicable to the dispute and justified U. S. intervention. Olney's dispatch also contained the notorious and

1. In 1893, William L. Scruggs, a former U. S. Minister to Caracas, was hired by Venezuela to lobby her case in the United States. In 1894, he published a pamphlet that, under the suggestive title: British Aggression in Venezuela, or the Monroe Doctrine on Trial, gained a wide circulation among the American public.

2. Grover Cleveland, as quoted in Henry James, Richard Olney and his Public Service (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1923), p. 101.

oft-quoted phrase: "Today the United States is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition."¹

Salisbury's reply came, after a long delay, at the end of November. Great Britain refused to arbitrate and denied the applicability of the Monroe Doctrine to the Venezuelan case. After conferring at length on the matter, Olney and Cleveland brought the question before Congress. In his December 17 message, Cleveland now declared:

The dispute has reached such a stage as to make it now incumbent on the United States to take measures to determine . . . the true division line between the Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana . . . When such a report is made . . . it will be the duty of the United States to resist by every means in its power . . . the appropriation by Great Britain of any lands . . . which after investigation we have determined of right belong to Venezuela.²

The U. S. public opinion violently seized upon the matter. "[A] period of shirt-sleeves diplomacy and breech-clout morality . . . a brief madness, but awful while it lasted."³ The tone of the dispute between the United States and Great Britain rose. Could it be war? The crisis was suddenly resolved by an outside event.

On December 29, 1895, Dr. Leander Starr Jameson led

1. Richard Olney, in James, op. cit., p. 109.

2. Cleveland, as quoted by J. Fred Rippy in Latin America in World Politics (New York: Crofts, 1931), p. 116.

3. Richard Ogden, "Our Venezuela Sobering," The Nation, vol. 69, No. 1789 (October 12, 1899), p. 12.

a small company of Rhodesians against the Boers in the Transvaal. The expedition proved a fiasco. German animosity toward England immediately showed itself, as the Kaiser, on January 2, 1896, sent a public telegram to President Paul Krüger of Transvaal, congratulating him upon the successful suppression of the raid. The possibility of an open clash with Germany eroded British intransigence. On January 25, the Secretary for Colonial Affairs Joseph Chamberlain stated: "We do not covet one inch of American territory. War between the two nations [Great-Britain and the United States] would be an absurdity as well as a crime . . . I should look forward with pleasure to the possibility of the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack floating together in defence of a common cause, sanctioned by humanity and justice."¹ Lord Salisbury now felt that the intervention of the United States would turn out to be an advantage "for the simple reason that the United States would be likely to force Venezuela to abide by any peaceful settlement which might be reached."²

Salisbury was proved right. The Arbitral Tribunal, convened in Paris at the beginning of 1897 to decide on the case, was made of two British representatives, chosen on behalf of Great-Britain, two Americans, chosen on behalf of Venezuela, and a Russian jurist, selected by both parties, to preside.

1. J. Chamberlain, quoted in J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain (London, 1934), pp. 159-160.

2. Salisbury, as quoted in Rippy, op. cit., p. 120.

As one Venezuelan observer put it: "If it was our national sovereignty that we wanted to defend, why is it that our own judicial power is ignored? Why is it that one of our representatives is being appointed by the U. S. Supreme Court?"¹

The verdict, cast in October 1899, was overwhelmingly favorable to the British claims. Venezuela was in no position to argue. The Guayana boundary dispute would continue, intermittently, up to the present day.

The presidential elections for the 1898-1902 term were approaching. Crespo had guaranteed their complete freedom. Five candidates were presented. The candidate of the Liberal Party, officially endorsed by Crespo,^{was} General Ignacio Andrade, a gentlemanly well-intentioned non-entity. The other candidates were: the former president Juan Pablo Rojas Paúl, an amateur poet Dr. Arismendi Brito, a famous humourist and Academician, General Francisco Tosta García, and finally, a most controversial character, General José Manuel Hernández.

José Manuel Hernández² was born in Caracas, in 1853, the son of a carpenter, a Spaniard from the Canary Islands. Upon his father's death, the young José Manuel took over the small shop, but he had already become involved in the political

1. César Zumeta, Letter of January 27, 1897, in Las potencias y la intervencion en Hispanoamérica (Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1964), p. 110.

2. For the following, I have relied primarily on Vicente Lecuna, La Revolución de Queipa (Caracas: Garrido, 1954).

fights of his day. When he was seventeen years old, he lost two fingers of his right hand in a combat near a place called "Los Lirios" ("The Lilies"). He was referred, thereafter, as "El Mocho de los Lirios" or simply as "El Mocho."¹ He got married, was widowed, imprisoned and ^{eventually} afterwards forced to flee from Caracas. His life from then on was a sequence of adventurous excursions. He worked as a carpenter in several islands of the West Indies, and in the early 1880's he was reported to be in Cuba.

In 1887, he went to the Yuruary territory, in the Venezuelan Guayana region, to work in the gold mines. There, he participated in the formation of a Liberal Democratic Society, geared to defend the interests of the Yuruary against the exactions of unscrupulous administrators.² In 1892, he rose in arms in favor of Crespo, distinguished himself in the taking of the Orinoco port-town of Ciudad Bolívar, and was subsequently rewarded by being appointed deputy to the National Assembly for the Yuruary territory.

At the end of his term, two years later, now at mild odds with the Crespo regime, he "found it advisable for his peace of mind and well-being of body" to leave Venezuela for the United States. Upon his arrival in New York, a suit was brought against him by an American company whose property, the Ciudad Bolívar water works, had been seriously damaged

1. The word "Mocho" means "someone whose upper extremities are maimed in one way or another."

2. "Documentos del General José Manuel Hernández," Hernández Archives, National Academy of History, Caracas.

by his troops during the 1892 campaign. Put under bonds, Hernández fought the suit, and fought it successfully until, after the lapse of one year, a verdict was returned in his favor.¹ This action greatly enhanced his already growing prestige.

In 1897, his candidacy was proposed under the label of a new party: the Liberal Nationalist Party. Hernández, who had observed the campaigning techniques used in the United States, particularly those of William J. Bryan in his drive for the Presidency against McKinley, decided to apply them and sell his image to the public.

He organised an extensive program of tours, speeches, mass meetings, explaining his program, which consisted in a restatement of all the liberties that had been consistently trampled in Venezuela for over half a century.² Hernández's popularity grew to the point of becoming a genuine cult. His humble origins, his adventurous and slightly intriguing past, all contributed to give him an aura of almost saintly grandeur. His naïve sincerity and honesty, his warm and open manner won him the affections of the crowd. Pictures of him, enclosed in small medallions, were carried as virtual amulets.

The Crespo establishment had been indulging so openly in practices of graft and corruption that Crespo himself, upon hearing a newsboy in the street cry out the headline of

1. J. J. Díaz Barcenás, "The Situation in Venezuela," The Independent, vol. 53 (August 15, 1901), p. 1910.

2. "Programa del Partido Liberal Nacionalista" in Documentos que hicieron historia, tomo 2 (Caracas: Presidencia de la República, 1962).

the day's paper: "Crespo's last theft!", was reported to have turned to his Minister of Public Works and said: "Who on earth ever told them it was going to be the last one!?"¹

By opposing the candidate of the Liberal Party, Hernández was opposing a body that had been dominating Venezuelan politics for the past three decades, and thereby crystallized under his new "Nationalism" the remnants of a neo-conservatism, geared primarily to counter certain personalities of the Guzmancista liberal school. Hernández though, also claimed to be a liberal. By simply opposing Crespo's stooge, the inconspicuous Andrade, the "Mocho" benefited from the kind of psychological mass enthusiasm, the same undefinable but highly charismatic appeal that had characterized movements such as Boulangism, which had swept through France only a few years back.

Crespo was well aware that his candidate did not stand a chance in front of Hernández. On the election day, September 1, 1897, he had the polling tables occupied by his own men who could manipulate the ballots at ease. As a predictable result, Andrade was elected.

Hernández immediately rose in arms against the electoral farce and won wide support throughout the country. Crespo personally set out to quell the rebellion. The fight

1. This anecdote is recorded in Eduardo Michelena, Vida Caraqueña (Barcelona, 1967), p. 136. It is widely confirmed as true.

was carried down to the llano lowlands. At a place called "La Mata Carmelera," Crespo was killed by a stray bullet.

Instead of benefiting from the situation and marching toward Caracas, Hernández moved away, to the backland mountains of the Lara and Falcón states. He was finally tracked down, captured and sent to the Rotunda prison of Caracas.

Now that his political mentor was dead, Andrade was left in an extremely precarious position. A defamatory campaign had spread the rumour that he was not even a Venezuelan citizen, but a Colombian renegade.¹ At any rate, his more than dubious mode of election did not promise a very auspicious future.

In February 1899, barely a few months after Hernández's capture, one of the Generals who had been sent against him, Ramón Guerra, now rose in arms against the government, claiming to stand for "the interests of the outraged masses."² Guerra was, in turn, defeated.

This new victory lifted the spirits of the government. It believed that a possible era of "Octavian peace" was at hand. It was even thought that a projected reform, giving back to the Venezuelan states their autonomy as defined by the 1864 Constitution, could be directly enacted by Congress without going through the procedure of convening a new Constitutional Assembly. In strictly technical terms this was a violation

1. Andrade was actually a native of the Andean mountain provinces, born in the city of Merida in 1839.

2. Francisco González Guinán, Mis memorias (Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1964), p. 273.

of the current constitution. The reform, however, was considered *sufficiently popular* not only to justify such a violation, but also to benefit the government's cause.

On April 22, 1899, Andrade's project was debated in Congress. A stormy debate. The unconstitutionality of the measure was denounced. "Because you have been successful in crushing the revolutions that have arisen so far does not mean that it will always be the case,"¹ declared deputy Francisco González Guinán, a prominent figure of the Guzmán Blanco years. González Guinán together with twenty-four other deputies cast the "nays," but the reform was approved by an overwhelming majority.

Disgusted with the outcome, González Guinán retired to his hacienda in the Carabobo state. A month later, he was called back to Caracas by President Andrade who told him that General Cipriano Castro had crossed the Colombian border and ~~invaded~~ Venezuela.²

1. González Guinán, op. cit., p. 274.

2. Ibid., p. 275.

CHAPTER V

CIPRIANO CASTRO: EARLY YEARS

From the plateau of Tama, in Colombia, to Mount Altar, near Barquisimeto, 450 kilometers--250 miles--to the north-east extends the main ridge of the Venezuelan Andes.

^{the mountainous ridge was}
A distinct area, divided by the administrative will of man into three states: Trujillo, Mérida and Táchira, three portions linked together by a common regional affinity.

As opposed to the rest of the country, the Andes show no penetration of the black, or mulatto, elements of the population. There Indian and Spaniard have mingled into a race of sturdy men. Here, in the intermontane valleys of the fertile Tierra templada zone (3,000 to 6,000 feet), the population centers have concentrated: Mérida, the traditional academic hometown of the prestigious University of the Andes; Trujillo, the breeding ground for military chieftains; Táchira, the farmland.¹

The Andes region had managed to keep out of the gradual process of disintegration that characterized the Venezuelan political life of the nineteenth century.² Part of the Vice-Royalty of Nueva Granada (Colombia), with the

1. Mariano Picón-Salas, Los días de Cipriano Castro (Caracas: Garrido, 1954), pp. 10-12.

2. In the course of the civil wars, a number of prominent families from the lowlands sought refuge in the Andes region: such names as Pulido, Baldo or Bustillos are among those. Arturo Cardozo, Proceso de la historia de los Andes (Caracas: Biblioteca de autores y temas tachirenses, 1965), p. 87.

exception of Trujillo, until the creation of the Capitanía General of Venezuela, it had maintained close ties, mainly cultural, with Colombia to the point that the immediate frontier line was, in a way, a blurred concept of no real significance, except as a pretext for sporadic border wars.

The administrative decentralization that resulted from the independence favoured the regional spirit of the Andean populations, the andinos. All the economic habits generated from the Colonial Period were left intact, in particular the auctioning of municipal contributions, the extensive use of local state monopolies in the sale of liquor or the trade of cattle.¹ This last item led to extensive cattle smuggling.

Despite their forming a common front against intrusions from the central lowlands, as occurred during the Federal Wars (1859-1863),² the Andean provinces were the siege of continuous feuds between local chieftains of the three states. The fights between liberals and conservatives were, here, a microcosmic repetition of the national pattern, with Colombia serving as a convenient sanctuary for the losing party.

1. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, "La conquista andina," notes for an unfinished book, Vallenilla Lanz Archives, Paris.

2. In June 1859, General Zamora ordered an invasion of the Cordillera which was defeated. Efforts of invasion were repeated later in the year and in 1860, all unsuccessful. See Cardozo, op. cit., pp. 88-89 and Francisco Alvarado, Memorias de un tachirense del siglo XIX (Caracas: Biblioteca de autores y temas tachirenses, no. 14, 1961), p. 3.

In Mérida and Trujillo, the conservatives, or ponchos, were the majority, in the Táchira, an area of smaller landholdings, the liberals, or lagartijos, were the core.¹

The political astuteness of the central seat of power in Caracas was to appoint Governors, either andinos or from other provinces, who would play these mutual rivalries, both within and between states, against one another. An easier control over the whole region was thus obtained. The Andes had become a virtual proconsulate, a rich booty in which to plunder at ease.²

Located at the confines of Colombia and Venezuela, the Táchira state is a placid country of industrious and taciturn people. Of the three Andean states, it is probably the one with the strongest sense of regional identity. Its fusion in 1867 with the neighbouring Zulia state, thus consecrating administratively the strong economic linkage already existing between the two states--the Zulia port of Maracaibo was the Táchira's maritime outlet--met with strong opposition and led the following year to an early split of this ephemeral fusion.³

1. Cardozo, op. cit., p. 92.

2. Ibid., p. 95.

3. See Alvarado, op. cit.

The Táchira is a land of smooth colours, grassy fields, swelling pastures, sugar cane and wheat-growing alternating with cattle-grazing. A peaceful region with a mild climate (70° all year round), where the hard work of man had organised a simple life. The peasant was, in most cases, the owner of his own plot of land. He was poor, but not squalid; if not happy, at least serene.¹

In the villages, huddled on the mountain slopes, or languidly resting at the bottom of a sheltered valley, God and the parish priest were the two respected authorities, the Jefe Civil (civil chief) being their temporal complement. A strong and unaltered sense of tradition and status-consciousness was maintained. It was in one such village that, on October 12, 1858, Cipriano Castro was born.

He was the third out of the ten children of Don José del Carmen Castro, commonly called Don Carmelo, and Doña Pelagia Ruiz.³ Don Carmelo Castro, a man of strong Indian

1. Taking as a criterion the number of elementary schools (74) and of secondary schools (12), one could say that the Táchira at the turn of the century, enjoyed one of the highest literacy rates in the country. Boletín de Estadística, Año III, no. 2, 1907, pp. 231 and 456. On another level, no less significant, the Táchira also benefited from the highest meat consumption level per inhabitant. Domingo Alberto Rangel, Los andinos en el poder (Caracas, 1964), p. 29.

2. A vivid account of the daily life in the Táchira at the beginning of this century can be found in: Nemecio Parada, Visperas y comienzos de la revolución de Cipriano Castro (Caracas, 1968), in particular chapters IV, VI and X.

3. The children were: Celestino, Nieves, Cipriano, Graciliano, Román, Laurencia, Clotilde, Cecilio, Florinda and Josefa. Cipriano Castro's birth registration is kept in the parish archives of Independencia (Capacho Nuevo).

features,¹ was a small, but well-to-do, landowner who had achieved a mediocre, but respected, position in his village. A man of gentle character and gentle intelligence.

Very little is known about Cipriano Castro's early life. He was, reportedly, a turbulent and impetuous child, who would regularly beat up his older brother Celestino,² but at the same time vivacious and quick to learn. His father's situation allowed him to receive a fair education. His studies were initiated in Capacho, under the guidance of village tutors.³

By the year 1872, Don Carmelo decided to send his son to the Pamplona Seminary, in Colombia, to complete his studies, with, perhaps, the secret hope of seeing him one day occupy the prestigious position of parish priest.⁴ Cipriano did not stay long in Pamplona, probably no more than two or three years. His turbulent behaviour was singularly out of place in the cold and recondite environment of the seminary. During that short time, though, through lessons of

1. It was contended that he was the descendant of a Motilon tribe Indian. Even though there is little evidence to this, one could still affirm that Don Carmelo Castro was of recent pure Indian ancestry. Vicente Dávila, Investigaciones históricas (Caracas: Imprenta Bolívar, 1923), tomo 1, p. 281.

2. Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 17.

3. These were Don Vicente Durán and, later, Don Juan de Dios Bustamante and Dr. Federico Bazó. José Valeri, "Rasgos biográficos del General Cipriano Castro" (1903), in Venezuela, Archivo Histórico de Miraflores, Boletín, referred to as BAHM, Año I, no. 1 (Caracas, Julio-Agosto, 1959), pp. 73 and 74. These data have also been recollected in Marco Figueroa S., Los dos Capachos (Caracas: Biblioteca de autores temas tachirenses, 1967), p. 185.

4. Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 19.

Latin, Rhetoric and Grammar,¹ he was exposed to a style of thought and a pattern of prose writing, redundant, grandiloquent, melodramatic--products of the decadent Colombian romanticism--that he was to retain the rest of his life.

Thus, at about the age of seventeen, Cipriano Castro had ended his formal education. By no means a highly educated person, he was essentially the result of an honest, provincial upbringing. A semi-literate man with a taste for words and posed situations.

His return to Capacho coincided with the powerful earthquake of May 18, 1875² that reduced the village to shambles. Reconstruction seemed to such a point hopeless, that a proposition to build a new village, about a mile away, was brought forth. The Castro family was one of those who supported the idea with greatest insistence, which aroused the enmity of some of the leaders of the old village, who simply wanted to have it rebuilt on the same spot. Among these was a certain General Espiritu Santo Morales.³

Around that time, also, Don Carmelo was widowed and married again a certain Doña Gumersinda Mora,⁴ who was to give him another son: Carmelo. Cipriano, meanwhile, had taken a job as village-store manager and, in 1878, left for San

1. Ibid.

2. Parada, op. cit., p. 13.

3. Valeri, op. cit., p. 74 and Parada, op. cit., p. 14. Finally both the old village, Capacho viejo, and the new village, Capacho nuevo, were built, the new village, though, becoming the district capital, a factor leading to a strong rivalry between the two villages. Later, probably to avoid confusion, both villages were renamed, Libertad (Capacho viejo) and Independencia (Capacho nuevo).

4. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 18.

Cristóbal, the capital of the Táchira state, to work in the stores of Messrs. Van Disser, Thies and Co.¹

The nation's coffee fever of the 1870's and 1880's had critically affected the Andean provinces. Initiated in the early 1870's, the systematic cultivation of the coffee plant in the region was spurred by the German trading houses of Maracaibo.

The word was spread: coffee was the new gold. Coffee production soared (1,846 tons in 1870 to 3,363 tons in 1880),² at the expense of the other agricultural goods, such as sugar cane, or cotton. The nascent textile industry^{too} was ruined. The coffee fever reached its peak around 1880. Prices had risen from 106 Bolívares--twenty-two dollars--per ton in 1870 to 150 Bolívares--thirty dollars--per ton in 1879.³ Inflation had boosted the region's economy beyond control.

In 1880, the prices for coffee dropped to 90 Bolívares --eighteen dollars--per ton. The depression hit the Táchira more particularly, for the excesses of coffee monoculture had been pursued further there than in the other two states. This depression was, in a way, maintained by the trading houses of Maracaibo, German or English, who continued their financing practices. The region's economy, like that of the entire country,

1. Valeri, *Ibid.*

2. Veloz, *op. cit.*, pp. 158 and 198.

3. Cardozo, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.

was now subjected to the fluctuations of coffee prices on the world markets.

Trade, however, was flourishing, mainly owing to the construction of a railway, the Grán Ferrocarril del Táchira--a Venezuelan concern¹--between the Andes region and Maracaibo. Foreign capital, primarily German, penetrated the area. San Cristóbal, in the Táchira, was one of those trading posts. A small movement of immigration, for the most ^{part} Italian, was initiated.² In 1878, the Táchira Oil Company started the commercial refinery for petroleum in Venezuela. The product refined was mainly kerosene. These operations were, of course, on a very minor scale, yet they were symptomatic of the region's pioneering development.³

The Andes was thus one of Venezuela's most prosperous regions for the time being. A prosperity that showed signs of disintegration, a prosperity that did not account for the increasing indebtedness of the Andean landowners, that covered up the miserable condition of the coffee-hacienda labourers, who were forced to work for a negligible salary ^{and} who probably dreamed of the uncertain but surely more auspicious future *awaiting* them in the armed bands of a local caudillo.

1. Rayburn, "Rail Transportation," op. cit., p. 44.

2. Cardozo, op. cit., pp. 100-101. For further details see Tomás Castilla, Datos para la historia económica del Táchira, 1870-1880 (Caracas: Biblioteca de autores y temas tachirenses, no. 36, 1963).

3. Rafael Gonzalez Rincones, Pioneros del petróleo en Venezuela (Caracas: Editorial Sucre, 1951).

Cipriano Castro soon grew tired of being a shopkeeper. Politics seemed to be the career that would best suit his growing ambition. In 1884, however, a curious incident occurred. Cipriano's sister, Florinda, had been asked in marriage and then abandoned by her suitor. Attempting to track down the offender, Cipriano went to see the man's brother, the parish priest of a neighbouring village, whom he had known for many years. Upon the latter's unwillingness, or inability, to give him any information, Castro flew into a rage and threatened the priest with a gun. Shots were fired, wounding another one of the priest's brothers who had tried to interfere.¹

This was a serious offense for which General Espíritu Santo Morales, then Military Prefect of San Cristóbal, was only too glad to have this young hothead imprisoned. Castro stayed in jail seven months and, on the night of September 24, 1884, escaped with two other inmates and fled to the frontier town of Cúcuta, in Colombia,² where he remained for two years, pondering upon his incipient political career.

He had started out in 1876 by opposing the liberal General Francisco Alvarado who was then running for the Presidency of the Táchira state.³ By 1878, he had switched to a

1. While he was in jail, Castro himself wrote an account of this incident, which he had published afterward. It is his first, known, published document. Cipriano Castro, Mi demanda (Cúcuta: Tipografía de Manuel Lascano y Cia., 1884) in BAHM, Año II, no. 8 (Caracas, Septiembre-Octubre, de 1960), pp. 3-20.

2. Valeri, op. cit., p. 76.

3. He reportedly fired against one of Alvarado's men. Alvarado, op. cit., p. 202.

liberal stance, and participated in the taking of San Cristóbal by a group of autonomists who refused to submit to the authority of the centrally-appointed governor.¹

During his stay in Cúcuta, Castro became involved in the Colombian civil strife. It followed the same pattern of feudal disputes between liberal and conservative groups that prevailed in Venezuela. Little is known about the exact role he played. Inflamed by the polemical rhetoric he constantly heard, he may have begun to feel that, perhaps, he too was called to play one of those epic roles in history: a new Bolívar, a new Napoleon. Perhaps.

He started plotting his return. It was also during his stay in Cúcuta that he met his future wife, Zoila Martínez, supposedly the illegitimate daughter of a British officer, who had been adopted by one of Cúcuta's prominent families, the Arochas.²

In June 1886, having switched again to the conservative bands, Colonel Cipriano Castro crossed the frontier with an expedition of two hundred men, under the orders of General Segundo Prato and of the Doctor and General Carlos

1. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 23.

2. The British officer's name was Mac Pherson. This information was given to me by Mrs. María Cardenas de Villamizar, whose family was a close friend of the Arochas'. Zoila had a fair complexion, and delicate features. She was universally admired as being a very beautiful woman.

Rangel Garbiras. Their opponent was the ever-present Espíritu Santo Morales, then Military Supervisor of the Andean frontier line.

The revolutionists occupied Libertad (Capacho viejo) on June 23. On June 29, Castro's company attacked Morales' headquarters at a point called "Los Alvarados." Morales, nicknamed "El Patón" ("clumsy foot") because of his big feet, was forced to retreat to San Cristóbal where he met with General Juan-Bautista Araujo, the National Delegate for the entire Andes region. Araujo, a notorious Trujillo conservative, impressed by the revolutionary successes, disavowed Morales, a stubborn Táchira liberal, who now found himself in the opposition.

He was, in turn, tracked down by the victorious revolutionists, and was again defeated near the hamlet of "La Chiriría." He barely escaped from being captured and sought refuge across the border, in Colombia.¹

Cipriano Castro had certainly fought well, even though it was insinuated that he was partly responsible for Morales' escape, and that, at any rate, he had not particularly distinguished himself from the other officers in the movement.² Nonetheless, he was promoted to the rank of General, and was

1. I have relied primarily on José Valeri's account of these events. Valeri, op. cit., p. 75.

2. Manuel Chávez González, Apuntaciones críticas sobre la vida y milagros del General Cipriano Castro (Cúcuta, 1897), p. 6.

now considered a man of influence and prestige.

It was the day after the taking of Libertad (Capacho viejo), at the funeral of Colonel Evaristo Jaimes, one of the revolutionary commanders who had been killed in the action, that Castro met another local figure who was to become his close friend and future companion of adventure: Juan-Vicente Gómez.¹

Gómez was born on July 24, 1859 in the "La Mulera" hacienda, about ten kilometers--six miles--away from Capacho. His father, Pedro Cornelio Gómez, was the bastard son of a Colombian gentleman, José-Rosario García Bustamente, the original owner of "La Mulera." Pedro Cornelio, who carried his mother's name, Gómez, soon took over the hacienda, and, at the age of twenty-two, in 1857, married Hermenegilda Chacón Alarcón, who would bear him thirteen children, the eldest being Juan-Vicente.²

The Gómez clan ruled over "La Mulera" and its surroundings. Its numbers were increased by cousins and a new generation of illegitimate offspring. Juan-Vicente Gómez was the archetype of the andino peasant: quiet, reserved, poised, slow and cautious. He had received enough schooling to know

1. Pablo Emilio Fernández, Gómez el Rehabilitador (Caracas: Jaime Villegas, 1956), p. 68.

2. Luis Eduardo Pacheco, Orígenes del General Juan-Vicente Gómez (Caracas: 1963). Of those thirteen children, three died in early infancy, one remains unknown. The others were: Juan-Vicente, Indalecia, Juan Crisóstomo (Juancho), Elvira, Regina, Ana, Pedro César, Emilia and Aníbal.

how to read, write, and keep the accounts of the hacienda.

A man of no fantasies, hardworking, shrewd and calculating, he now ran the hacienda,¹ and saw it prosper. Castro and Gómez, in a way, completed each other:

the former's wild exuberance, idealistic dreams; the latter's earthy view of life and almost irritating calm. A Latin American Don Quixote and his Sancho Panza. Gómez remained the man behind the scenes, the éminence grise of the Castro regime, until he became the silent instrument of that regime's overthrow.

On October 11, 1886, Cipriano Castro got married.² He was twenty-eight years old. A short man (about 5'4"), he was once reported to have said: "Men like me must win the stature that nature has not given us."³ His features were handsome, and at the same time disquieting because of the look in his eyes, at times sensual, at times glaring. He would soon grow a beard, a trait which accentuated his resemblance to an Arabian caliph . . . or a monkey. His physical countenance was both ridiculous and awesome. He was violent, passionate, and, above all, ambitious.

Ambitious to live the life of a hero of fortune. He

1. Pedro Cornelio Gómez died in 1883.

2. His father, Don Carmelo, died around that time. Cipriano Castro's marriage license is kept in the Castro Museum of Independencia (Capacho nuevo).

3. Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 26.

believed in dreams of grandeur, in his being predestined to great deeds. His political leanings were never well defined. Professing either liberal or conservative, autonomist or centralist affiliations, as circumstances varied, he remained an unswerving liberal, in his rhetoric at least. His opportunism was only matched by his megalomania, both aberrant, and naïve in its aberration. He soon came to think of himself as a new Napoleon, even accepted the nickname of "El Cabito" (Spanish for "le petit caporal"). A capable man, intelligent and brave, yet, at the same time stubborn, unscrupulous and vindictive, Cipriano Castro was a bizarre amalgamate of opposites. He was essentially a composite man.

CHAPTER VI

ON THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

In 1888, Dr. Rangel Garbiras became President of the Grán Estado "Los Andes,"¹ and had Castro appointed Governor of the Táchira section. Castro proved himself a clever administrator.² His prestige spread to the point that Rangel Garbiras himself became somewhat disturbed. Factions of Ciprianistas were not opposing the once homogeneous group of Rangelistas. Rangel Garbiras, who came from one of the cordillera's aristocratic families and held a doctoral degree in Medicine from the University of Paris,³ resented his former protege's increasing aggressiveness.⁴

In 1890, Castro was elected Representative of the Tachira state to the National Congress in Caracas. It was the first time that he was leaving his native province. He thought that he could, at last, fulfill a part worthy of his

1. As a reminder (see Chapter IV): under Guzmán Blanco's Constitution of 1881, Venezuela was reduced from twenty states to nine administrative units, or Grandes Estados, "big states." The Grán Estado "Los Andes" was one such entity, corresponding to the three states Mérida, Trujillo and Táchira which were, now, section states of the major Grán Estado.

2. One of his political mentors and administrative advisers at that time was Dr. Santiago Briceño, a well-known and respected figure in Táchira politics. He was to remain Castro's private counselor for many years.

3. This information was given to me by Mrs. Ana Teresa Rangel de Contreras, Dr. Rangel Garbiras' daughter.

4. The peak of disagreement was reached when Castro, upon being elected Representative of the Táchira state to the National Congress, imposed as his own candidate, General Rafael Rojas Fernández to succeed him as Governor, overruling Rangel Garbiras' support of the other candidate for office, General Antonio Niño. See Santiago Briceño Ayestarán, Memorias de su vida militar y política (Caracas: Tipografía Americana, 1949), pp. 22-23.

He rose to speak in Congress. The verbal redundance--even for those days--of his speech,¹ his strange andino accent,² his looks, provoked a general laughter. The uncouth ingenuity of this provincial chieftain amused the old guard of wily politicians. Despite this un auspicious début, Castro established contacts with influential people like the historian and polemist, Domingo Antonio Olavarria, and even managed to ingratiate himself with the President of the Republic, Dr. Andueza Palacio.³

At the start of Crespo's "Legalista" revolution, in March 1892 (see Chapter IV), Andueza appointed Castro Military Commander for the Táchira and Mérida states that had rebelled, following Crespo's call to insurrection. Castro managed to fight his way back to San Cristóbal, through Maracaibo and Colón, and started organising his army, numbering about eight hundred men.⁴

The situation in the Táchira was that of a renewed civil war. An incoherent coalition had been formed, that comprised a contingent of lagartijo liberals, invading from Colombia,⁵ a group of extremist Rangelistas,⁶ and the followers

1. Parts of it are quoted in Enrique Bernardo Núñez, El hombre de la levita gris (Caracas: Garrido, 1943), p. 7.

2. People from the Andes have a distinctive accent in Spanish which resembles that of Colombia.

3. Núñez, ibid.

4. Valeri, op. cit., p. 76. For a detailed and prejudiced account, see Chavez González, op. cit., p. 7.

5. The leader of that group was General Buenaventura Macabeo Maldonado, who would soon join the ranks of the conservative Rangelistas.

6. Rangel Garbiras himself, though, was not openly involved.

of Trujillo's conservative strong man, General Araujo, who saw here an excellent opportunity to reassert his authority in the Táchira. The total forces numbered around two thousand men, and the supreme command was given to General Espiritu Santo Morales, now back in arms.¹ Basically indifferent about its affiliation, the coalition sided with Crespo since this regionally impersonal cause served ^{each of their} conflicting interests. It was, also, a uniform way to oppose Castro's stance.

With the help, both in arms and in men, that his friend Juan-Vicente Gómez was able to provide, Castro managed to crush the insurgents near the town of Táriba, next to San Cristóbal, and a second time at a place called "El Topón."² Then, he chased the remains of Morales' forces up to Mérida. There, he met with the Andueza government's Military Delegate, General José-María García Gómez, and told him of his intention to pursue the fight against Crespo into the central lowlands. The hour of heroics was there at last!

Contending that President Andueza was well in control of the situation, García Gómez dissuaded Castro from his project, and advised him to return to the Táchira, and wait. A peace treaty was signed in San Mateo, Mérida State, on May 30, 1892, with the different Andean representatives.³ The three

1. For a detailed account, see Valeri, op. cit. pp. 76-77.

2. Ibid.

3. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 8.

Andean states then decided to join the newly formed Liga de Occidente, which grouped Venezuela's western states (Zulia, Falcón, Lara, Zamora and Los Andes) into a short-lived union.¹ The ligue declared its interests to be independent from both the Central Government and the Revolution, but still entered the general fight as a third force, under the rallying banner of the sovereignty and autonomy of the different states, as defined in the 1864 Constitution.²

In October, despite García Gómez's prediction, Crespo's revolution triumphed, forcing Castro, Gómez and their followers on the road to exile. Years later, Castro was reported to have said: "Because of that fucking queer of García Gómez, my Táchira men and I didn't make it to the Nation's Capitol any earlier!"³

By the end of the year 1892, Castro settled down in the small hamlet of "Bella Vista," part of the "Los Vados" hacienda near Cúcuta,⁴ his former seat of exile. There, he

1. See Perera, Historia orgánica, op. cit., p. 219.

2. As a reminder (See Chapter IV). President Andueza Palacio argued that the popular will of the Venezuelans demanded the return to the 1864 Constitution which proclaimed the autonomy of the twenty states forming the territory of the Venezuelan republic, which had been reduced to nine under the centralizing Constitution of 1881, passed under the presidency of General Guzmán Blanco. For Andueza, this was a political pretext to have the 1881 Constitution changed in order to institute a re-election process, thus enabling him to succeed himself.

3. Quoted in Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 31.

4. The ruins of the "Bella Vista" hamlet can still be seen today in the "Los Vados" hacienda, now the property of Don Ramón Villamizar.

remained for seven years, perfecting his readings, particularly the classical works on military matters by Von Moltke and Von Clausewitz,¹ alternating the chores of the land with the preoccupation of an eventual comeback to Venezuela. After all, was he not one of the more promising political figures of the entire Andean cordillera? "General Castro is a well loved leader, generous with his friends, and even with his foes. The liberals of this Táchira state and many from Mérida and Trujillo, hold him as Leader of the Liberal Party in the Andes," had written the Trujillo General Pedro Paredes Pimentel,² shortly before Castro's exile.

Gómez, on his part, had bought the "Buenos Aires" hacienda, adjoining "Los Vados," and resumed the tribal, even life of "La Mulera."³ He continued to prosper.

In the early months of 1893, Castro left for the Dutch island of Curaçao, in order to escape from the order of arrest that Espíritu Santo Morales, now triumphant in the Táchira, had had issued against him.⁴

In Curaçao, Castro initiated a correspondence with

1. Valeri, op. cit., p. 77.

2. Quoted in Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 31.

3. Facing Cúcuta, the "Buenos Aires" and "Los Vados" haciendas are located, respectively, on the right and left-hand sides of the road that goes from Cúcuta to Pamplona. In "Buenos Aires" Gómez lived with his current concubine, Dionisia Bello, who bore him seven children in the seven-year period of exile. Pacheco, op. cit., p. 40.

4. "Cipriano Castro, jefe de la frontera y exilado," BAHM, Año IX, no. 49-50-51 (Caracas, Julio-Diciembre 1967), pp. 4-6.

Venezuela's new ruler, General Joaquín Crespo,¹ who invited him to come down to Caracas, under the guarantees of the general amnesty that had just been decreed by the new Congress.

In September 1893, a meeting was held between the two men, an inconclusive affair. Castro in his usual grandiloquent terms promised his neutrality in the affairs of the republic.

"I return to my home, from where I shall watch, unmoved, the life of the Fatherland go by, and I shall only unsheath my sword when the salvation of the liberal cause will force me to do so."² More laconically, Crespo, the caudillo from the llanos was to say: "That's a little Indian who thinks his skin is too tight for him."³

Castro returned to "Bella Vista" and renewed his correspondence. By that time Cúcuta and its neighbouring region had become the rallying point for a whole group of Venezuelan exiles who patiently waited for an auspicious hour to come:

1. The first contacts between Crespo and Castro were made, unofficially, through the Colombian liberal writer Dr. Alirio Díaz Guerra, Crespo's one-time private secretary, who was interested in recuperating Castro's unused arsenal from the 1892 campaign, for his party's use back in Colombia. Castro assured him of his liberal sympathies, agreed, in principle, to relinquish his armament, but there is no evidence to the effect of the transaction. See Alirio Díaz Guerra, Diez años en Venezuela (1885-1895) (Caracas: Editorial "Elite," 1931), pp. 211-218. Parts of the Crespo-Castro correspondence is quoted in Emilio Fernández, Cipriano Castro y la paz de Venezuela (San Cristóbal, 1897), pp. 7-13.

2. Quoted in Carlos E. Echeverría, Opusculos (Caracas, 1901), p. 8.

3. Quoted in Nuñez, op. cit., p. 9.

among these were Castro^{and} Gomez and their followers, and also Dr. Rangel Garbiras who now disagreed with Crespo's government. A common exile had brought Castro and his former leader together again, but Castro's commitment to the liberal movement in Colombian politics made any reconciliation between the two men fall short.

Meanwhile, Morales' efforts to have Castro arrested through the Venezuelan consular authorities in Cúcuta met with no avail.¹ Actually, the consul, himself, General Luis Mata Illas, had joined the circle of Castro's admirers.²

In 1895, through his then Minister of Finance, Manuel Antonio Matos, Crespo tried, once more, to win Castro's formal allegiance to his government by offering him the lucrative position of Administrator of the Puerto Cabello Customs Office. Castro refused to submit to that kind of bribery and continued issuing public letters about his views on current Venezuelan affairs: notes of a redundant and seemingly disinterested patriotism.³

From its distant exile, Castro's voice stood out. He himself was not forgotten; yet, to many, he was just another one of those regional politicians, heard, but not really listened to. In October 1895, the new National Delegate for the

1. "Cipriano Castro, jefe de la frontera y exilado," BAHM, op. cit., pp. 7-11.

2. Castro, later on, appointed him Governor of the Federal District of Caracas, a post at the head of which he was assassinated in 1907.

3. See Fernández, op. cit., pp. 15-17.

Andes region, General Diego Bautista Ferrer and the new consul in Cúcuta, Juan Otañez Maucó, visited him in "Bella Vista." Both were, later on, to follow his rising star.¹

At the start of the Guayana conflict with Great Britain, Castro helped form a "Patriotic Junta" and offered his services to Crespo "in order to contribute to the defense of the integrity of the territory and of our national dignity." He added: "The Venezuelan government cannot but take a strong stand . . . the conflict must be resolved according to the pattern established by the civilized nations of the world."²

The 1897 presidential elections were approaching. In Caracas, Domingo Antonio Olavarria wrote an article in which he proposed the name of his old friend, Cipriano Castro, as that of a possible candidate.³ Castro's answer to the article was a model of political cunning: "Never would I have imagined that I would make a good candidate for the Presidency . . . I have neither the aptitudes nor the knowledge necessary for such an office."⁴

1. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 8.

2. Cipriano Castro, Letter of March 17, 1895, in Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., pp. 5-7. Also, see Cipriano Castro, Letter of February 15, 1896, reproduced by Ramon Carvajal in "Castro en 1896 pide formar un 'solo todo' contra Inglaterra," El Nacional, Caracas, February 5, 1971.

3. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 5. The article was published in the Caracas newspaper El Tiempo, under the title "Candidaturas."

4. Cipriano Castro, Letter of March 29, 1897, in Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., pp. 7-10.

A few months later, Castro addressed a public letter to President Crespo. He confirmed his own neutrality in the election, insisted on the danger of a single-handed picking of a candidate for the Liberal (Crespo's) Party, and proposed the meeting of a Convention to decide on the nomination.¹

Crespo answered the veiled attack: "For the advice, you are too late; for the threat, you are still too early."²

The elections were held; their fraudulent outcome led Venezuela, once again, to a general civil war. Crespo's death in the quelling of the "Mocho" Hernández's rebellion had sounded a time for renewed action. In June 1898, Rangel Garbiras and his followers staged an invasion on the Táchira, which was defeated by Espíritu Santo Morales' troops under the command of a young and promising General, Juan Pablo Peñaloza.³

Rangel Garbiras was driven back across the border.

Meanwhile, underground preparations were slowly being carried out by Castro's followers in the Andes.⁴ The central

1. Cipriano Castro, Letter of June 29, 1897, in Documentos, Ibid., pp. 13-19.

2. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 7.

3. Among the invading leaders were General Buenaventura Macabeo Maldonado, of the 1892 campaign, and Dr. Eliseo Vivas Perez. The movement was defeated in the combats of San Josecito and Libertad (Capacho viejo). Parada, op. cit., pp. 35-37, and Briceño Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 30.

4. Among the active leaders of this Ciprianista Party Committee were the Colonels Regulo Olivares and Santiago Briceño Ayestaran, General Froilan Prato, Dr. Lucio Baldo and, later, Dr. Samuel E. Niño. Briceño Ayestaran, op. cit., pp. 31-35.

government, with the unimpressive figure of the new President, General Ignacio Andrade, seemed unable to establish any long-lasting control over the stirring nation.

In September 1898, taking advantage of a newly decreed general amnesty, Castro went to Caracas. He had been advocating the cause of provincial autonomy for the Táchira, and set his hopes on obtaining the state's governorship.¹ He went to see President Andrade. He was kept waiting for several hours in the antechamber of the Casa Amarilla, and was not received. Upon being ignored in such a humiliating way, he left, in a rage.² He stayed in Caracas for a few weeks, regrouping his friends, warning that if Andrade ever threatened the country's sacred institutions--again there were talks about the President's intention to modify the constitution by changing the administrative status of the provinces--he would personally stand up in their defense.³

1. Teodosio Ramón Blanco, Compendio, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

2. José Rafael Pocaterra in his Memorias de un Venezolano de la decadencia (tomo 1) (Caracas: Elite, 1937), p. 12, gives a famous description of this episode. Andrade, in his memoirs, contends that he did receive Castro but would not acknowledge his demands. It is possible that Castro tried to see Andrade more than once, and was kept waiting on a second attempt.

3. Manuel Modesto Gallegos, Anales contemporaneos, tomo 2, (Caracas: Tipografía Americana, 1926), p. 54. Among Castro's sympathizers was the influential General Ramon Ayala at whose house most of these meetings were held. A Revolutionary Centre was formed, joined by such personalities as the former President, Dr. Andueza Palacio, who, now that he had returned from his Parisian exile, had not forgotten Castro's support to his cause six years ago.

Even though Andrade's projected reform corresponded to the ideas about provincial autonomy that he had been supporting, Castro's decision was taken: he would invade on the first occasion. He returned to his Colombian exile by sea. He set sail from La Guaira on November 2, 1898, on the Dutch schooner Castor.¹

A stop at Curaçao, on the way to Maracaibo, allowed him to hold talks with the important group of exiled Venezuelans living there.² He was promised support. Upon his arrival in Maracaibo, he met with several local leaders³ in the house of Don Felipe Arocha, ^{one of} his wife's foster uncles, who was running an important trading business there. Again, he was promised support and offered funds to carry the operations through. Plans for invasion were outlined. The movement would cross the frontier from Colombia and continue towards the center, towards Caracas.

Castro reached "Bella Vista" at the end of the year 1898. Contacts were activated in the Táchira. Gomez financed the first expenses.⁴ All that was needed now

1. Blanco, op. cit., p. 8.

2. In particular the old General José-Ignacio Pulido and his followers. Picon-Salas, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

3. Blanco, op. cit., p. 11. Among them, Generals Zuleta and Luis Felipe Navas. The uprising would take place in the Zulia state as soon as the invasion from Colombia materialized.

4. Castro himself was in a tight financial situation. "Bella Vista" had not proved as prosperous an enterprise as "Buenos Aires," by 1899, most of the property had been mortgaged. On December 19, 1898, Castro transferred to Gomez the benefit of his life insurance policy, on the Equitable Life Insurance Society of New York, in the amount of \$5,000. Twenty-five years later, after Castro's death, Gomez was to find out that

was a pretext that would justify the invasion on "legal" terms.

The ^{favorable} vote taken in the National Congress on April 22, 1899
(see Chapter IV) on the question of provincial autonomy,

constituting an open violation to the current constitution served the purpose.

A few miles away from "Los Vados," at a place called "La Donjuana," a major meeting was held between Cipriano Castro, Dr. Rangel Garbiras, and their respective followers. Now that the invasion was imminent, it was hoped that the two leaders would unite forces. Rangel Garbiras advanced the thesis of a separate, dual command, civil and military, for the movement. Castro, in turn, proposed a single, undivided leadership, and feigned to give in by suggesting that Rangel Garbiras take command, knowing very well that the latter's recent military defeat made the offer unacceptable.¹

Upon Rangel Garbiras' expected refusal, Castro, then, assumed command. The coalition would not be formed. It was agreed, however, on Rangel Garbiras' terms, that, if the revolution were to be successful, elections would be held in favor of the leader of the Nationalist Party, General José Manuel Hernández, currently in jail. After all, the "Mocho" was still

after having "sold" his life insurance, Castro had cancelled the policy in February 1899, and had been refunded the \$5,000. Thus he had actually "sold" his life insurance twice. "La historia de un seguro de vida," BAHM, Año III, no. 13 (Caracas, Julio-Agosto 1961), pp. 213-218.

1. Parada, op. cit., p. 35..

the most popular man in Venezuela and should have been President instead of Andrade if legality had been observed.¹ Castro evidently saw the advantages that could be obtained from this situation, for Hernández still counted with a great number of followers, particularly in the central states (Lara and Yaracuy). Thus, at the start, the invasion was carried out under the auspices of the "Mocho's" Liberal Nationalism, the new movement's name being that of the Liberal Restoration.²

The "La Donjuana" meeting broke up. The disagreement over leadership left bitter traces. Rangel Garbiras was now a potential, if still unavowed, enemy. He and his faction remained in Colombia, while Castro and his men departed. Like Bonaparte on the eve of 18th Brumaire, Castro would proclaim that a constitution had been violated and ^{he was setting} ~~that~~ out to restore it. On the night of May 22, 1899, Cipriano Castro, Juan Vicente-Gómez and fifty-eight men crossed the border

1. Blanco, op. cit., p. 15. Teodosio Rarón Blanco seems to be the only contemporary narrator of these events who points out this important factor in the early history of the Restoration. Facts prove, at any rate, that Castro did seek support from Hernández's factions during his invasion.

2. "Restoration," since its aim was to "restore" the constitution. Castro was called "El Restaurador," the "Restorer." This confusion in terminology was favorable to Castro. The "Liberals" allied to their opponents the "Nationalists" setting out to restore constitutionality. Wouldn't such an auspicious coalition end all civil disorders in the future?

into Venezuela.¹

1. The original sixty who invaded Venezuela were hence known as "Los Sesenta," "The Sixty." Their names were: Cipriano Castro, Juan-Vicente Gomez, Manuel Angulo, Melecio Bello, Particio Bello; Madedonio Benavides, Carmelo Briceño, Antonio Cárdenas, Gregorio Castro, Raimundo Castro, Horacio Epaminondas; Azael Gámez, Gregorio Gámez, Pedro Antonio Gámez, Mateo Gámez, Manuel Gámez; Jesus García; Anibal Gómez, Aparicio Gómez, Canuto Gómez, Eustoquio Gómez, Hernán Gomez, Roman Gómez, Ovidio Gomez; Jesús Gonzalez, Lauro Matute, Gregorio Méndez; Manuel Molina, Pedro Molina, Faustino Moros, Jesús Moncada; Casimiro Nieto, Cornelio Nieto, Felipe Nieto, Flaminio Nieto, Isaías Nieto, Nicolás Nieto; Pedro Nieves, Cornelio Parra, Avelino Perez, Aureliano Perez, Severino Perez; Ceferino Ruiz, Claudio Ruiz, Ismaél Ruiz, Julio Ruiz, Pedro Ruiz; Cipriano Sánchez, Cruz Sánchez, Evaristo Sánchez, Juan-Bautista Sánchez, Juan de Mata Sánchez, Pablo Sánchez, Pedro Sánchez, Ramon Sánchez, Teotiste Sánchez, Natividad Santana, Julio Santander, Jesus Soto, Secundino Torres. Parada, *op. cit.*, p. 220. See José Giacopini Zarraga "Los hombres del 23 de Mayo" Caracas, El Nacional, 23 de Mayo de 1964. An analysis of these names shows that these "sixty" were made of several families, including members of the Castro and Gomez clans. Most of these men were labourers in the Gómez hacienda of "Buenos Aires."

CHAPTER VII

THE RESTORATION REVOLUTION (I): IN THE ANDES

The constitutional reform of April 22, 1899 had led to several administrative changes. General Espíritu Santo Morales, former President of the entire Andes region, had been assigned to the Presidency of the Táchira state, while still exercising the Supreme Military Command for the whole region. On May 23, 1899, he was in Mérida where the bulk of the government's contingent in the Andes was stationed.¹ In the Táchira proper, General Juan Pablo Peñaloza was in command of the San Cristóbal garrison.

The month of May in the Táchira was a month of festivities, involving numerous processions, celebrations and drinking bouts that resulted in a general relaxation of surveillance. This allowed the Castro invasion to go relatively unnoticed at first.²

Castro and his followers had crossed the frontier using a road that led to the "La Mulera" hacienda, and ended in the Capacho district, thus avoiding the frontier town of San Antonio.³ By noon of May 23, the two Capachos were occupied without any major resistance. There, contacts were established with the other successful uprisings that had taken place. Contingents of insurgents began flocking towards Independencia

1. Cardozo, op. cit., p.

2. Blanco, op. cit., p. 26.

3. Ibid.

(Capacho nuevo). From Colón, in the north, came Colonel Régulo Olivares; from Tariba and Mérida in the east, came Colonel Santiago Briceño Ayestarán and General José--María Méndez.¹

On May 24, about six hundred men had joined the movement, men like Pedro María Cárdenas and his brother Rafael, like Castro's own half-brother Carmelo, like General Miguel Contreras, nicknamed "Miguelón," a bawdy giant of Rabelaisian proportions.² Then, there was also a young boy of sixteen who had run away from school to join the invasion: Eleazar López Contreras. He was laughed at, at first, and sent back home, but, upon his insistence, was finally enrolled.³

So as to officialize the insurrection, Castro reviewed his troops with a proclamation.

Venezuelans!

The numerical majority of the National Congress. . . forgetting its sacred duties towards its constituencies and towards the Fatherland, has committed the supreme crime of infringing upon the present Constitution of the Republic in its disgraceful resolution of April 22.

. . . It has committed the crime of prevarication . . . and decreed a dictatorship, that could already be foreseen, since the gallant General José Manuel Hernández, victim of his own drive, was defeated . . .

1. Eleazar López Contreras, Páginas para la historia militar de Venezuela (Caracas, Tipografía Americana, 1944), p. 4.

2. Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 45.

3. López Contreras had just graduated from secondary school, the Colegio del Sagrado Corazon in La Grita, which was run by the illustrious Monsenor Jesús Manuel Jáuregui, and was about to start a course of studies in Medicine at the University of Mérida. He preferred to join the invasion. López Contreras, op. cit., p. XX-XXII.

Fortunately for the honour and glory of the Venezuelan people, twenty-five Representatives . . . voted against the revolution . . . Glory, then, to those Champions of Liberty and Justice, veterans of the true Venezuelan Liberalism , , , General Andrade, who had assumed the Leadership of that Great Party has now lost its confidence.

To take as a means to pronounce a dictatorship the popular idea of the Federal Autonomy of States is . . . an irritating sarcasm . . . It is good that the Autonomy of States be proclaimed, for it is a necessity, and for it is the will of a majority of Venezuelans; but such a process must be achieved in a legal manner, . . . without trampling the Constitution and its laws. The disastrous consequences of this dictatorship are already outlined in the project of monopoly on one of our major industries: tobacco, as well as in that of establishing a paper-currency. Ah! We have gone seventy years back.

Venezuelans!

. . . This is the dilemma: either we become passive slaves, denying our glorious past and our rights, or we become free men, even though this may imply great sacrifices

Compatriots!

No more farces, no more tyrannies, no more oppression! Arise in arms with the sole purpose of revindicating your natural rights and thereby save the honour of the Venezuelan nation, which is also your own. Let us swear before the sacred altar of the Fatherland . . . not to depose our weapons until our legitimate aspirations are met.

Soldiers!

You have known me long enough and you know that, always victorious, never defeated, I have sacrificed it all to my sacred duties of patriot and liberal: you know that I am incapable of committing an infamous or cowardly action. The sacred tree of liberty demands, once more, your blood, run forward to shed it with the legendary valour that is truly your own.

Your motto shall be: to be victorious, or die.¹

1. Cipriano Castro, Documentos, tomo I, op. cit., pp. 19-21.

"To be victorious, or die," these words rang echoes of bravery among this heteroclite mass. These were the sons of the mountain, the sturdy, ragged andino peasants, rising, armed with sticks, machetes and an occasional gun, led by a generation of young men¹ who believed that the time had come, at last, for them to play a part in the political life of the nation that would both serve their ambitions and end the era of wasteful corruption in the republic's institutions.²

Following the impetuous little man with the dark beard and fiery eyes, whose emphatic words carried out messages of heroism, they were, later, to form the core of Venezuela's political and military hierarchy for the following fifty years.

If the uprising had been successful in most of the Táchira, it had failed in San Cristóbal, where General Peñaloza had established a stronghold.³ Castro decided, at first, to besiege the city. On his way, he was informed that a contingent of about three hundred men, under the command of General Ramón-

1. Castro, who was only forty-one, was among the older members of his group.

2. General Lopez Contreras told me that this attitude was widespread among his companions. Ciro Sanchez Pacheco, in his novel Los Andinos (Caracas: Garrido, 1968), gives an overview of that prevailing mood.

3. The plans for the city's takeover, which had been entrusted to Dr. Samuel E. Niño, were discovered. Niño was forced to hide, and later managed to escape and join Castro. His failure was later attributed to his stupidity and cowardice. Rather disobliging comments about him would circulate. José-Rafael Pocatererra, in his novel, El Doctor Bebé, satirized the figure of this unsuccessful conspirator.

Ignacio Velasco, had been sent to reinforce Peñaloza and was approaching San Cristóbal.¹

Plans were changed. Peñaloza did not move. Castro placed his troops on the heights of Tonono', overlooking the "La Popa" road that the governmental forces were taking, and waited.² The clash. Castro's men swooped down. The fight lasted for about an hour. Velasco was killed. A substantial amount of arms and ammunition was captured. The prisoners made were set free and invited to join the movement, which most of them did.³ This practice was repeated after every combat. And the march towards the east continued.

The following day, May 25, Castro was, again, informed that a new contingent, this time of about six hundred men under the order of General Leopoldo Sarria and of General Pedro Cuberos, the Military Commander of the frontier town of San Antonio, was on its way.⁴

While keeping Peñaloza from intervening, Castro, once again, set out to intercept these reinforcements and, by dusk, on May 27,⁵ attacked at a place called "Las Pilas." Colonel Régulo Olivares led the first round of fire and the charge.

1. Blanco, op. cit., p. 27.

2. Ibid.

3. Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 66.

4. Antonio Martínez Sánchez, Nuestras contiendas civiles (Caracas: Garrido, 1949), p. 183.

5. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 6. For two days (May 26 and 27) there was some uncertainty as to which road the government contingent would take.

"Viva Castro"! A new victory for the revolution was scored. Cuberos was killed, Sarria was wounded and captured. Olivares was hit in the face by a bullet and forced out of combat.¹ Cuberos' body was sent to Peñaloza.

Castro now established his headquarters in the town of Tariba, five kilometers--three miles--north of San Cristóbal. He now counted with a small army of about 1,500, which he began dividing into battalions like the "Bolívar," the Liberator," and the "23 of May."³ Volunteers were flocking from all over the state, and in San Cristóbal, Peñaloza did not move.

From Mérida, General Espiritu Santo Morales, the eternal opponent, was now approaching with four battalions, about eight hundred strong, scoring some minor successes on his way.⁴ The time for a major confrontation had come.

The plateau of El Zumbador stands at a height of two thousand meters--6,500 feet--above sea level. A cold, treeless landscape: el páramo. The land of the condor, of icy winds and bitter dry fogs.⁵ On June 9, having left Gómez behind to keep Peñaloza in check, Castro arrived at El Zumbador

1. Manuel Antonio Pulido Méndez, Régulo Olivares y su época (San Cristóbal: Biblioteca de autores y temas tachirenses, no. 28, 1962), p. 20.

2. Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 67.

3. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p.

4. See Geronimo Maldonado, Episodios, páginas sobre la Revolución Restauradora de Venezuela (Caracas: Tipografía J. M. Herrera Irigoyen, 1900), pp. 57-62.

5. Emilio Constatino Guerrero, Campaña heroica (Caracas: Tipografía, J. M. Herrera Irigoyen, 1903), p. 51.

with a small detachment, disposed his troops on both sides of the plateau, and waited. Morales arrived on June 11, as the morning mist was dissolving.¹

"The enemy! The enemy!" . . . "Charge!" . . . "General, I have the enemy on my back. I am waiting for your orders." This was "Miguelón" Contreras. "Colonel Contreras," answered Castro, "you have your orders. Now, if you are afraid, stay here." . . . "General Castro, 'Miguelón' asks for more ammunition." "Tell 'Miguelón' that the ammunition he wants is in the enemy's hands." . . . "Morales has the weapons. Charge."²

By noon, the battle was over. Morales, who, decidedly, had the glory of always being on the losing side when confronting Castro, was, once again, defeated. Seriously wounded, he fled, abandoning arms and equipment, chased by General José-María Méndez who commanded the Mérida section of the revolutionary army.³ Losses, on both sides, were estimated at about four hundred.⁴ The fight had been strenuous. Castro, victorious and enthusiastic, returned to Táriba.

He had contracted a beginning of pneumonia from the cold winds of El Zumbador, and was forced to remain in bed.⁵

1. Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., p. 186.

2. Maldonado, op. cit., pp. 67-69.

3. Maldonado, Ibid., p. 79.

4. Cipriano Castro, Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., p. 24.

5. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 9. During that time, the Official Staff of the Revolutionary Army was organized. Commander-in-Chief: General Joaquín Garrido; Secretary: Colonel Roman Moreno. Under-Secretary: Colonel Pedro Pablo Rodríguez. See Briceno Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 69.

San Cristóbal was now the only pole of resistance in the Táchira. And Peñaloza was not taking any initiatives.

Upon Castro's prompt recovery, on June 23, the siege of San Cristóbal began. At that time, there appeared to join the invasion a certain General Benjamin Ruíz, a Colombian from the Panama province, who had been living for some time near San Cristóbal. A mysterious man, about whom the strangest stories were told: that he was a witch-doctor, a convicted counterfeiter. He had decided to seek his fortune in Venezuela. His suave and talkative manner won him Castro's sympathies, and under his adopted "Venezuelan" name of Dr. Rafael Bolívar, he became a ^{prominent} figure in the campaign.¹ He was one of the chief negotiators in the talks on San Cristóbal's surrender, that were initiated at the beginning of July, consciously dragged on by Peñaloza, who was confident that the central government would soon seek to rescue him.²

When the news of Morales' defeat at El Zumbador reached Caracas, President Andrade's government finally became aware of the importance of the Táchira uprising. A decree was issued, ordering the formation of an expeditionary force, to be placed under the orders of the Minister of War, General Antonio Fernández. Fernández left Caracas with a contingent of two thousand men,

1. Ramón J. Velásquez, "Benjamin Ruíz y Rufino Blanco Fombona," BAHM, Año II, no. 11 (Caracas, Marzo-Abril 1961).

2. Maldonado, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

and sailed from Puerto Cabello to Maracaibo where, in early July, he initiated his march southward, towards Colón and San Cristóbal, receiving reinforcements on the way to a total of about another thousand.¹

On July 12, Castro was informed of the impending menace. He ordered that the siege of San Cristóbal be lifted, and, rejecting the offer of mediation which was being proposed by the influential Táchira educator Monseñor Jesús Manuel Jáuregui,² set out north to meet Fernández. The clash took place on July 28, near the village of Cordero, on the slopes of a coffee plantation.³

Hampered by the number--he only disposed of about one thousand men--and the position--Fernández's troops had managed to place their artillery on the heights--Castro, taking advantage

1. Antonio Fernández, "Por la verdad-Defensa de Antonio Fernández," BAHM, Año II, no. 11 (Caracas, Marzo-Abril 1961), p. 29.

2. Maldonado, op. cit., pp. 105-112, reproduces the correspondence between Jáuregui and Castro. Monseñor Jesús Manuel Jáuregui was one of the more prestigious figures of the Táchira. He had been, among other things, the founder of the Colegio del Sagrado Corazon in La Grita, one of the best secondary schools in the country. A man of great learning and wisdom, he had been a friend of Castro in the past. Jáuregui, who had been informed of Fernández's approach considered it a useless sacrifice in human lives to continue the fight and offered his services as mediator to a possible arrangement with the Andrade government. Jáuregui soon came to the conclusion that such an agreement would not be feasible and, on July 22, wrote Castro suggesting that he surrender to Fernández. Castro interpreted the Monsenor's move as a betrayal and answered in a violent letter. This episode ended the period of friendship between the two men. In May 1900 Castro had Monseñor Jáuregui imprisoned. Public outcry led to the priest's release. Jáuregui was then, expelled from Venezuela and died in exile, in Rome, in 1904. Francisco Salazar-Martínez, "La expulsión de Monseñor Jáuregui por Castro" "Estampas," El Universal, Caracas, October 24, 1971.

3. Blanco, op. cit., p. 33.

of a propitious rainfall, ordered a prompt retreat, all the way to the Capacho district.¹ Fernández, surprisingly enough, did not try to chase him, but continued his march towards San Cristóbal where Peñaloza waited passively.

Back in Independencia (Capacho nuevo), on July 31st, Castro called for a meeting with his officers and decided on a supreme gamble: to outflank Fernández, to bypass San Cristóbal and continue directly towards the northeast, towards Caracas, leaving the enemy behind.² The plan was approved, and, on August 2nd, 1899, the "march of conquest" began,³ as the news came of the Zulia state's final uprising in favor of the revolution.⁴

On August 5, a junction was made with the troops of General José-María Méndez who had met a varied fortune in their chase behind Morales.⁵ Méndez informed Castro of a possible encounter with governmental forces before reaching Mérida.⁶ The young General Rafael González Pacheco had been

1. Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., p. 185, and A. Fernández, op. cit., p. 32.

2. López Contreras, op. cit., pp. 13-15.

3. The Revolutionary Supreme Command was restructured. Supreme Commander: General Cipriano Castro; Second-in-Command, and in Charge of Operations: General Juan-Vicente Gomez; Chief of Staff: General Aurelio Valbuena; Commander in Charge of Ammunition: Colonel Manuel Angulo; Commander in Charge of Sanitation: Dr. Benjamin Ruiz; Head of the Honour Guard: Colonel Jorge Bello. Blanco, op. cit., p. 35.

4. Blanco, ibid., p. 34.

5. Maldonado, op. cit., pp. 79-100 gives a detailed account of that campaign,

6. Briceño Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 76.

given the order to raise an army and stop Castro at all costs. Yet, because the Andrade government was, nominally at any rate, the representative of the Liberal Party, the Trujillo conservative factions, on whose territory the army was being raised, had its contingents reduced from the initial one thousand to two hundred men who were only provided with six rounds of ammunition per head.¹

The battle with Castro was fought on August 6, at Tovar, seventy-five kilometers--fifty miles--away from Mérida. González Pacheco was defeated and forced to retreat. The fight had been fierce. The gallant General José-María Méndez was killed. Over one hundred rifles were captured.²

On August 9, Castro entered Mérida, amidst a warm display of sympathy. The advance of the revolution was slowed down by the season's pouring rains, by the cold mud of the high paramo of Mucuchíes, by the fact that most of these soldiers of fortune were without shoes or adequate clothing. A bizarre group, with its shabby equipment and its band of prostitutes following the march.³

Back in San Cristóbal, Fernández and Peñaloza waited and did nothing. On August 15, Castro occupied the

1. A. Fernández, op. cit., p. 33.

2. Maldonado, op. cit., pp. 124-126.

3. The name of four of these prostitutes has been recorded: Amelia Candiales, Mercedes Moros, Sara Suarez and the "Negra" María who achieved a solid reputation as a fighter in battle. Parada, op. cit., p. 223.

town of Valera in the Trujillo state, without encountering any resistance, the town's Military Commander, the Doctor and General Leopoldo Baptista, having ordered his troops --1200 strong--to retreat and stand back.¹

"Trujillans! I salute you," proclaimed Castro.

"The Liberal Party, the party that was once founded by the Son of the carpenter of Bethlehem (sic) is now standing, the entire republic is moving . . . Trujillans, the hour of redemption has arrived."² The road to the lowlands lay open. The Andean hordes swooped down.

1. Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 80.

2. Cipriano Castro, Proclamation of August 17, 1899, reproduced in La Aclamación y el 5 de Julio en Valera (Valera: Tipografía del Centro Industrial, 1906), pp. 18-21.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESTORATION REVOLUTION (II): IN THE LOWLANDS

The reaction in Caracas, particularly among the well-to-do families, upon learning that Castro was approaching, was one of downright panic. Imaginations were filled with terrifying accounts of the atrocities committed by this "legion of cruel, impulsive and lecherous brachycephalic baboons,"¹ on its way to plunder and rape.

Castro continued his advance, the government forces opposing little more than a token resistance. The Lara state was crossed. The numerous partisans of the "Mocho" Hernández flocked to join the movement, or, at least, offer their tacit support.² The town of Carora was occupied on August 22. And the march continued, slightly delayed by a flood of the Tocuyo river, which led to a minor encounter with government troops near the town of Parapara, on August 26.³

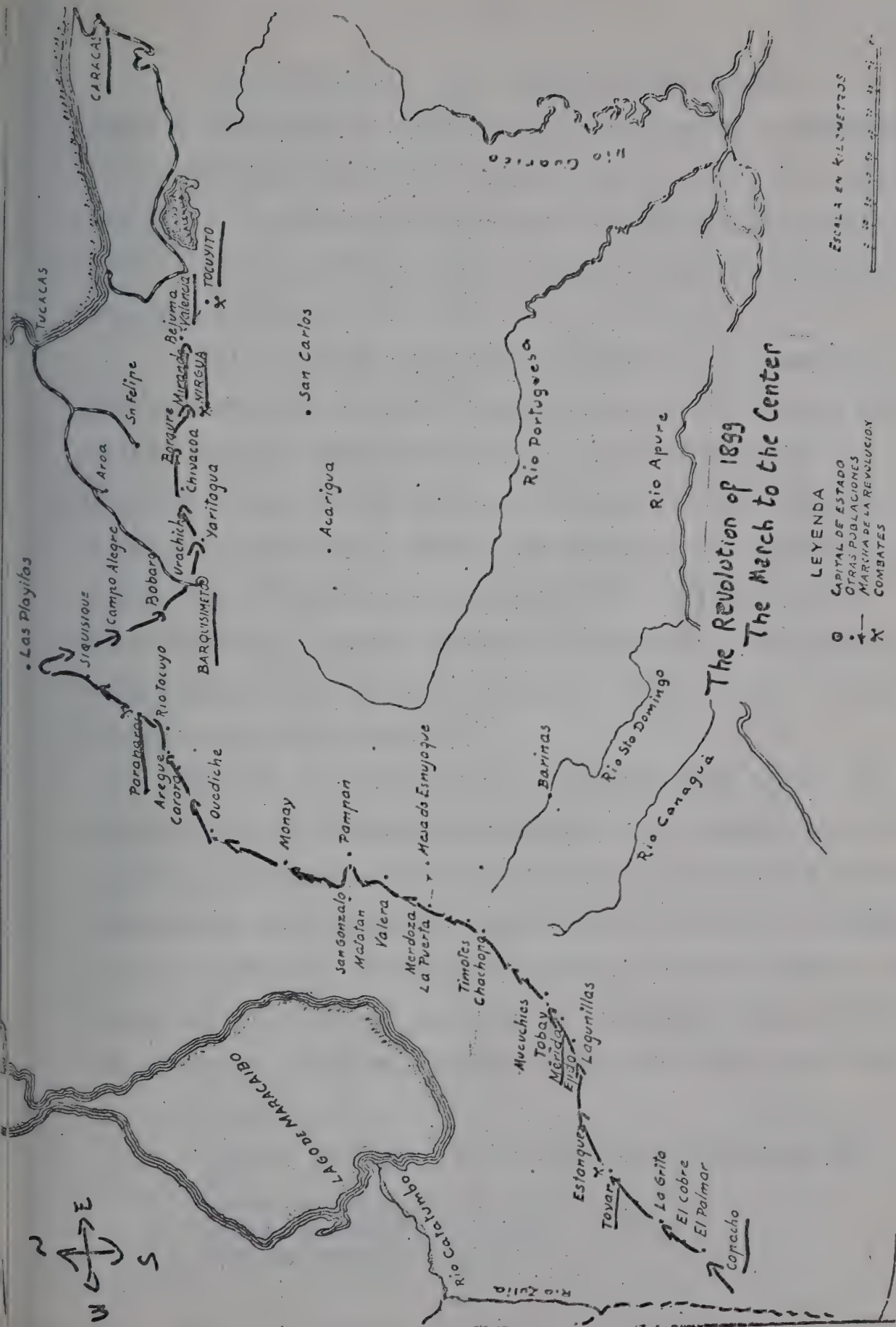
Avoiding the Lara state capital of Barquisimeto, Castro went on. The Commanding Officer of the town's garrison, General Aquilino Juárez, did not even try to stop him, nor to stop a small contingent of the town's "Liberal Patriots" from joining the movement.⁴

1. José Rafael Wendeake, Venezuela en los últimos treinta años (Panama: Editorial La Moderna, 1932), p. 6. This prevailing mood is best conveyed in the novel Vienen los Andinos! by Francisco Márquez Cairos (Caracas: Editorial Orinoco, 1956).

2. Blanco, op. cit., p. 36 and Juan Sánchez Narración histórica del partido liberal, Reprint (Caracas: La Industria, 1900). This pamphlet advertised Castro's cause among the "Mochista" Nationalists and advocated their joining the movement.

3. Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 81.

4. See Lino Irribarren Celis "Aquilino Juárez en el trance de la Revolución Restauradora," El Nuevo Herald (Barquisimeto) August 18, 1947; and Francisco Jiménez Arraiz, Del vivac (Cumaná: Imprenta Mila de la Roca, 1904), part I "Barquisimeto."



Source: López Contreras, Páginas para la historia militar de Venezuela

It was September 1st. Back in San Cristóbal, after nearly a full month of inactivity, General Antonio Fernández finally set out on Castro's trail, but only at a very slow pace. He marched up to Valera, in the Trujillo state, there divided his forces and continued to follow the revolution from afar.¹

Castro, in the meantime, had reached the mountains that separated the Lara and Yaracuy states, and crossed them, guided through seldom used passes.² He fell upon the unexpected troops--1,200 strong--of General Rosendo Medina, in the town of Nirgua. Medina was defeated and retreated to the town of Valencia, the government's last stronghold before Caracas.³ Castro marched on, promising the "Mochista" followers, who now swelled his ranks, that he would personally free their gallant leader.⁴

So far, the revolution's successes were partly due to Castro's ability to manoeuvre swiftly, but, nonetheless, still depended primarily on the element of luck, and on the incredible carelessness with which the expeditionary forces sent against it were organised. Fernández was later to claim that the conditions in which he was carrying his campaign--the lack of food supplies, clothing, equipment and ammunition, the fact

1. Blanco, op. cit., p. 38 and López Contreras, op. cit., p. 26.

2. Fernando González, op. cit., p. 78.

3. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 27.

4. Blanco, op. cit., p. 37.

that his troops suffered from dysentery and malaria, and, finally the lack of cooperation, even the hostility he had encountered among the local chieftains, particularly in the Trujillo state--paralyzed any viable effort on his part.¹

To many of these provincial Generals, the future of the Andrade regime seemed altogether uncertain. "Wait and see. No unnecessary commitments." These appeared to be the mottos adopted.

It was now September 10, and Castro was only two hundred kilometers--one hundred and twenty miles--away from Caracas, near the small town of Tocuyito, at the head of an army of four hundred officers and 1,600 men.²

The time had come for President Andrade to take a final stand. Leaving Caracas to its growing tide of confusion and intrigues, he declared himself "in campaign," appointed General Victor Rodríguez, the current President of the Government Council, to serve as provisional Head of State, and set out to join the army of six thousand, which was being gathered in Valencia, under the dual command of the new Minister of War, General Diego Bautista Ferrer, the one-time guest of "Bella Vista," back in 1895, and of General Fernández himself,

1. A. Fernández, op. cit., pp. 34-36. Because President Andrade later exonerated Fernández from all blame in the upcoming disaster, his account can be trusted as accurate.

2. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 28.

who had been requested to abandon his abortive attempts to chase the andino invasion.¹

Fernández resented the fact that Ferrer now occupied his former Cabinet post, while Ferrer, whose leanings towards Castro were more affirmed than those of Fernández, did not particularly relish the idea of a joint command.

The lack of coordination that ensued accounted, in a major part, for the utter confusion that characterized the battle of Tocuyito which was initiated at noon, on September 14, 1899.² The government forces first attacked Castro's right flank, then retreated to resume the attack from the front. The road taken for that attack was limited on both sides by a barbed-wire fence which considerably hampered manoeuvring.³ Ferrer ordered the artillery to open fire, but did not specify the direction and range. The shells fell right in the middle of his advancing troops.⁴

Castro's single battery, on the other hand, managed to hit its target and nearly won the day,⁵ but he was nonetheless kept from crossing the Guataparo river, which was the last obstacle on the road to Valencia. And "Miguelón"

1. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 18 and A. Fernández, op. cit., p.

2. López Contreras, op. cit., pp. 28-30.

3. F. González, op. cit., p. 80.

4. The government's head gunner, Panchito Alcántara y Tayhardt, a West Point graduate, apparently mistook a battalion that was marching without its flag for the enemy. Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., p. 199.

5. Castro's gunman, Captain Rufo Nieves, took full advantage of the confusion in the enemy's ranks. Pedro María Morantes (Pío Gil), El Capitan Tricofero, Cipriano Castro, reprinted (Caracas, 1968), p. 14.

Contreras once more came up to Castro, asking for more ammunition. . . . "I've come to bid you farewell, General, because I think they are going to kill me this time."¹

In the turmoil of the fight, Castro badly sprained an ankle as his horse tripped into a ditch and fell over him.² Confusion upon confusion, the battle went on. Two battalions of governmental forces lost their way in a neighbouring sugar cane field and started firing at each other, amidst the high grown stalks.³

At around four P. M., General Ferrer sounded the retreat. Tocuyito had been a genuine bloodbath in comparison to the other combats of the campaign: over one thousand dead, including the rowdy "Miguelón" Contreras whose premonition had come true.⁴

The bulk of the government's forces, though, remained fairly untouched. It was on his way to the front that President Andrade learned about the Tocuyito defeat, and that Valencia had been evacuated without any further resistance.⁵ Without too much conviction, he ordered Ferrer and Fernández to join his headquarters in Guacara, then left for Caracas, leaving the command in the hands of his new Chief of Staff,

1. Briceño Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 88.

2. Ibid., p. 89.

3. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 32.

4. Briceño Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 89.

5. Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., p. 201.

the notorious General Luciano Mendoza of the 1892 campaign.¹ Only Fernández, who had opposed the evacuation, obeyed.²

Castro entered Valencia carried in a stretcher, on September 16, 1899, and was enthusiastically received, particularly among a certain group which was to form a permanent coterie around him. Of this "Valencia group," as it became known, three personalities emerged, Manuel Corao, Dr. Julio Torres Cárdenas and General Ramón Tello Mendoza who invited Castro to his own house where the medical care of Dr. Rafael Revenga, one of Venezuela's most prominent surgeons was provided. Revenga, like Corao, Tello Mendoza and Torres Cárdenas, became a favorite of the future Castro regime.³

The military campaign was over.⁴ Political negotiations and intrigues had taken its place. Intrigues between Castro and the "Mochista" Nationalists who had joined his

1. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 19.

2. He returned for a few days to his post as Governor of the Aragua state, then resigned and retired to Caracas exhausted from the campaign, and subjected to severe criticism for his past duties. A. Fernández, op. cit., p. 39. Andrade, in his memoirs, was to exonerate him from all blame.

3. A detailed account of the reception in Valencia is given in the recopilation of press clippings: Recepción del General Cipriano Castro: Valencia-Caracas (Caracas: Tipografía Moderna, 1899).

4. The total casualties for the campaign amounted to 3,500. 2,420 dead in battle, 534 dead from wounds inflicted in battle. 52 dead from drowning while crossing rivers and 494 dead from multiple causes (diseases, suicide, etc. . .) Manuel Landaeta Rosales, "Revolución acaudillada por Cipriano Castro," p. 146. Landaeta Rosales Archives, National Academy of History, Caracas.

ranks. Castro reaffirmed that he ^{was} a true liberal, ordered that the yellow flag, the emblem of the Liberal Party, be displayed and was showing no intentions of relinquishing power into the hands of General José Manuel Hernández.

Gómez adroitly saved the situation by inducing the "Mochista" leaders, who were showing a growing concern, to believe that Castro was, in fact, playing their game and would restore Hernández to power upon his arrival in Caracas.¹

There were also intrigues in Caracas, between the "Mochista" Nationalists and the Liberal Party, who both placed little trust in either Ferrer or Mendoza, and who both sought to move Andrade out of the way.

The "Mochistas" proposed that Hernandez be named Supreme Commander of the Army; the Liberals, on the other hand, pressed the government to come to an agreement with Castro.² Meanwhile, negotiations had been undertaken between Castro and General Ferrer, leading to the latter's joining the revolutionary side. Upon learning about Ferrer's betrayal and Mendoza's unwillingness to take arms, Andrade chose the path of negotiation and commissioned his Former Minister of Finance, the influential Manuel Antonio Matos, to initiate the talks with Castro.³

It was the beginning of October. Matos himself had

1. Blanco, op. cit., p. 40.

2. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 22.

3. Manuel Antonio Matos, Notas, op. cit., p. 64.

come to the conclusion: "Andrade is now an impossibility. On one hand we have Castro who has triumphed all the way from the Táchira, and, on the other hand, in Caracas, we have General José Manuel Hernández to whom his partisans aspire to give up the country, even though he is in jail. I think that in such circumstances, it will be wiser to offer support to Castro who, after all, proclaims himself Leader of the Liberal Restoration."¹

Matos was received by Castro at Tello Mendoza's house, lying on a bed due to his sore ankle. In the same room sat Gómez who had also come down with a touch of fever. Castro listened to Matos' proposals, but declared that he would only settle for Andrade's unconditional surrender.² Upon Matos' insistence Castro agreed to meet Andrade in the nearby town of Maracay. Fearing Mendoza's possible betrayal, Andrade did not attend the meeting. Castro was furious and cabled Matos, who had returned to Caracas, that all conciliatory talks were broken off. Matos had failed in his first attempt. Of Castro he said, "that man is a conceited lunatic."³

October dragged on. Negotiations were under way now between Castro and Mendoza, an old-timer of the liberal cause, to Andrade's increasing concern.⁴ The Nationalists also were

1. González Guinán, Mis memorias, op. cit., p. 280.

2. Matos, Notas, op. cit., p. 65.

3. Ibid.

4. For details on these negotiations, see Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 97.

growing restless, and even exploded a bomb at the door of Matos' house in Caracas¹ as a reprisal for his renewed efforts to carry out a final agreement with Castro. In the Rotunda prison, which had now become a social gathering place, General Hernández was harbouring high hopes for the future.

Andrade, on his part, now completely discouraged and alone, and prompted by rumours that Mendoza was advancing toward Caracas in order to arrest him,² decided to abandon the useless struggle. On October 19, he left from La Guaira on the steamer "Bolívar" and went into exile.³ Before his departure, he had ordered that General Hernández be set free, but even that order was ignored. From Valencia, Castro had, indeed, requested "the glory of setting the brave General free himself."⁴ This was also a convenient way to keep the "Mochó" from stirring up any trouble.

1. Manuel Antonio Matos, Recuerdos, op. cit., p. 45.

2. Matos, Notas, op. cit., p. 68.

3. Andrade lived for four years in exile, in Curaçao, first, then in the United States, and wrote his account of his years in office, Porque triunfó la Revolución Restauradora? (Caracas: Garrido, 1955) where he bitterly reflected upon the abuses and treasons of which he had been the victim. In 1903, he asked Castro for permission to return to Venezuela, which was granted. Upon his arrival, he had a talk with Castro that sealed the reconciliation between them. Andrade, from then on, led a quiet life, highlighted by a favor-appointment to the Ministry of the Interior in one of Gómez's first cabinets. There were those sarcastic tongues who spread the story that Gómez, who had been listening behind a curtain to the talk between Andrade and Castro, had said, afterwards, of Andrade, shaking his head in contemptuous concern: "He's just a poor man." See "Andrade frente a Castro," BAHM, Año II, no. 8 (Caracas, Septiembre-Octubre 1960), pp. 21 and following.

4. Quoted in Nuñez, op. cit.

General Victor Rodríguez, who had previously held a secret meeting with Castro, at Ferrer's and Mendoza's suggestion,¹ now declared the republic acephalous and assumed Provisional Command. On October 21, at San Mateo, near Valencia, Castro met with Mendoza and arranged plans for the final march to the capital.²

Matos, the secret artificer of the arrangement, met Castro on the way³ and thus, escorted by Mendoza's troops, and accompanied by his new would-be mentor, Cipriano Castro arrived in Caracas by train on the evening of October 22, 1899.

. . . "New men, new ideals, new proceedings"
The revolution had been successful. Its success, however, rested on an intricate and precarious compromise of policies, interests and ambitions. The years of the Liberal Restoration had begun. What was then the picture of the Venezuelan land and of the Venezuelan people?

1. Blanco, op. cit., p. 45.

2. Briceño Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 98.

3. Matos, Notas, op. cit., p. 69.

CHAPTER IX
VENEZUELA IN 1899

Of all Latin American folk music traditions, Venezuela's is probably one of the most lyrical in form. Its music springs out of the combination of four basic instruments: the cuatro, a four-stringed guitar; the maraca, made out of the dried shell of a tapara, the fruit of the taparo-tree, filled with dried seeds, and tied to a wooden shaft; the furruco, a sort of drum, in which the sound is obtained by rubbing a pole up and down a hole made in the surface of a stretched skin; finally, the harp, used particularly in the llano region.

The harp and the cuatro give the tune, while the maraca and the furruco punctuate the rhythm. There are lyrics often accompanying the play, usually improvised, and using the romance or the romancillo verse, two of the oldest forms of Spanish narrative poetry, the romancillo, with its six-syllable lines, proving, also, one of the most difficult to master.¹

The melody is rich and varied in its tonality. Gay in surface, yet harbouring an overall impression of deep melancholy, the rhythm is invariably syncopated. Versatility in tune is matched by rigidity in structure. The lyrics are often humorous, dotted with proverbs, sayings, popular wisdom bending the language to colloquialisms, yet also capable

1. For reference see Miguel Acosta Saignez, Estudios de folklore Venezolano (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1962).

of expressing sentiment in a simple but emotionally stirring way.

Three quarters of a century ago, folk music was more directly a part, or rather, an unconscious manifestation of the Venezuelan soul than it is today. It typified, then, the relation of the Venezuelan man with regard to his environment, the deep yearnings of his heart, his sense of self-consciousness and identity.

The amalgamation of cultural traditions found in its folk music: the indigenous maraca, the cuatro and the furruco derived from the Spanish guitar and zambomba, this latter instrument, in turn, being a token of the Iberian peninsula's North African heritage, was the reflection of an amalgamated population that, at the turn of the century, numbered around 2,550,000 individuals.¹

It was a population, racially integrated; yet whom social status, on psychological grounds, at any rate, was still determined by a fairer shade of skin. It was² a population that had developed an almost utopian sense of equalitarianism, the negation of any hermetical or unmovable social structure,² yet

1. The unreliability of the data available can only allow approximations. Nicolas de Veloz Goiticoa, Handbook, op. cit., p. 14. The division of the Venezuelan population shows a constant majority of the female element (about 50,000) which accounts for a woman's greater life expectancy rate.

2. Lisandro Alvarado, "Del movimiento igualitario en Venezuela," Obras completas (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, 1956), tomo VII, pp. 309-332.

"the masses had seen . . . their privileges, conquered on the battle fields, taken away, their demands for equitable land distribution be ignored, thus forced to go on bearing the miserable conditions of their daily existence."¹

A population plagued by disease, resulting in an average yearly increase of only 15,000.² According to the tables set up for the year 1904, 35% of the total deaths by ailments were caused by malaria (12%), tuberculosis (9.4%), dysentery (7.3%), and tetanos (6%).³ Out of that year's total of 52,160 recorded deaths, 22,170, nearly half (47%) occurred between the ages of 0 and 10.⁴ The resulting average life expectancy was thus only thirty-five years.

A population overwhelmingly rural, in a proportion of about 85%.⁵ In 1891, a census year, only four towns were reported to number more than twenty thousand inhabitants: Caracas, the nation's capital city, 72,429; Valencia, 27,538; Barquisimeto 29,093; and Maracaibo, 29,180,⁶ the regions of concentration having remained the same since the Colonial Period.

1. Eduardo Gallegos Mancera, El Nacional, Caracas, 21 febrero de 1959, quoted in Brito Figueroa, op. cit., p. 327.

2. Veloz Goiticoa, ibid. See Appendix IV.

3. Boletín de Estadística, Año II, tomo III (Caracas, Enero de 1906), p. 3. Fluctuations from year to year show that malaria alone sometimes accounted for over 16% of the total deaths by ailments.

4. Ibid.

5. National Census of 1891, as recorded in Boletín de Estadística, Año V, tomo IV (Caracas, Enero de 1908), pp. 226-230.

6. Boletín de Estadística, Año V, tomo VI (Caracas, Diciembre de 1908), p. 267.

A static population in which internal migration occurred on a very minor scale, involving either an enlargement of the manufacturing centers established in Caracas and Valencia during the second half of the nineteenth century, or movements of landless peasants towards the Andes region¹ where the "coffee boom" of the 1870's-1880's had created new job opportunities. Contrary to the practices of other Latin American countries, like Argentina or Brazil, foreign immigration was neither promoted, nor even encouraged.² In 1894, the total of foreign residents in Venezuela numbered 44,129, out of which 13,179 were Spaniards (usually from the Canary Islands), and 11,081 Colombians. Of the others, 6,154 British, 3,729 Dutch (mainly from the Dutch West Indies), 3,179 were Italians, 2,545 French (among them a large number of Corsicans), and 962 Germans.³

Thus, unhampered by outside cultural factors, the Venezuelan man, at the dawn of the twentieth century, found himself deeply rooted in his native surroundings, a closed world where a folklorical tradition was still a necessary and

1. Brito Figueroa, op. cit., p. 314.

2. Several experiments in settlement were attempted throughout the nineteenth century. In 1843 Martin Tovar established a small colony of Germans near La Victoria, fifty kilometers--thirty miles--west of Caracas, which still exists today, having lived for one hundred and thirty years in almost complete isolation. In 1855, the Government sponsored a contract for the import of Chinese immigrants. Again in 1873, under the supervision of President Guzman Blanco, settlements of French, Italian and Spanish immigrants were promoted. All these efforts fell short of any large scale result. See Brito Figueroa, op. cit., p. 315.

3. Veloz Goiticoa, ibid.

meaningful form of expression. It was

the expression of a population, illiterate in a proportion that ran over 80%, numbering only 35,000 pupils in elementary school by the year 1905,¹ and yet, still able to improvise romancillos.

At the turn of the century, Venezuela, in a way, resembled its folk music: poor in its actual means, but potentially rich in its soul. Typically underdeveloped, Venezuela was essentially a one-product economy, coffee being, by far, the most important item of export.² As far as it could be evaluated for the period, the per-capita rate of ^{annually} growth of the economy had remained stationary (0.3%) throughout the nineteenth century, and was to remain so into the first quarter of the twentieth.³ The sum of bank notes in circulation, issued by the three major banks (Banco de Venezuela, Banco Caracas, and Banco de Maracaibo), amounted, in 1903, to a total of only 4,395,000 Bolívars--879,000 dollars.⁴ Cash transactions were mostly carried out through the form of precious metals. The gold, silver and nickel deposits of the three banks, above mentioned, in

1. Venezuela, Ministerio de Fomento, Anuario estadístico de Venezuela, referred to as Anuario estadístico, 1910 (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1913), p. 401.

2. See Appendix V.

3. Lecture by Dr. Bernardo Ferran at the Center for Development Studies (CENDES), Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1962, quoted in José-Antonio Silva Michelena, The Illusion of Democracy in Dependent Nations (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1971), p. 49.

4. Veloz Goiticoa, Handbook, op. cit., pp. 432-436.

1907, amounted to 6,437,000 Bolívars--1,500,000 dollars--
 out of a total of 6,818,000 Bolívars--1,576,000 dollars¹--
 the difference consisting of the deposited bank notes.

This lack of monetary circulation, a result of the economy's stagnation, decreased the buying power of the population as a whole.

The peasant could be a jornalero, a worker in the hacienda, living on its grounds, allowed to raise his own subsistence in corn, potatoes, onions, etc., which formed what was called the conuco, and forced to give three days of labour per week to the hacienda itself, for which he was paid. Sometimes, this salary would consist of coupons that could be exchanged for products purchased within the hacienda.² The peasant could also be an arrendatario, or pisatario, who rented the land from its owner, paying either in kind or in free labour.³ Finally, the widespread cultivation of particular plants, such as coffee, enabled the development of the medianería, a contract by which the owner gave the peasant a plot of land, generally bordering the limits of the hacienda, on the condition that the peasant turn in half of the plants when grown and sell the remaining half back, upon request. So as to enable cultivation, in the meantime, the peasant received loans from the landowner, guaranteed by the

1. Boletín de Estadística,

2. Acosta Saignez, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

3. Brito Figueroa, op. cit., p. 231.

plants he was entitled to sell. As it often turned out, the peasant was forced to relinquish those plants in payment for past debts.¹

This exploitative system to which he was subjected coupled with the comparatively high cost of living, not only in manufactured goods but even in foodstuffs,² further separated the agricultural labourer, who represented over 80 percent of the working force,³ from any meaningful participation in the economic life of the nation. With an impoverished economy and an inadequate system of taxation, the State's meagre revenue had to depend almost entirely on the custom duties levied on imported merchandise.

Description.	1894-95.	1895-96.	1896-97.	1897-98.
	<i>Bolivars.</i>	<i>Bolivars.</i>	<i>Bolivars.</i>	<i>Bolivars.</i>
Import duties.....	32,337,691	37,259,167	35,068,329	22,599,413
Storage.....	70,105	91,535	80,029	39,460
Interest.....	98,682	141,406	125,930	70,725
Fines.....	36,229	54,923	33,474	27,204
Transit dues.....	7,874,923	8,429,009	7,712,935	6,507,854
Duty on tobacco.....	1,142,658	1,307,697	1,161,038	831,703
Stamped paper.....	147,485	141,046	126,196	106,952
Telegraphs.....	180,514	195,612	155,017	102,377
Telephones.....	6,486	3,890	5,449	5,637
Waste lands.....	28,303	30,001	97,333	20,682
School fines.....	1,546		2,270	
Consular fees.....	460,623	389,788	411,462	177,786
Registry.....	90,635	97,145	97,603	67,592
Product of salt deposits.....	989,891	1,169,871	1,039,629	844,249
Salt tax, additional.....				132,270
Income of educational institutions.....	504,083	540,808	543,831	533,098
Territory revenue.....	26,091	10,400	10,400	10,400
Mining tax.....	46,588	16,099	23,622	10,284
Postage stamps.....	1,058,083	1,078,184	1,110,777	852,468
Patents.....	3,870	4,500	6,010	7,150
Luerto Cabello wharf dues.....	28,314	375,964	341,959	205,216
Profit and loss.....	3,036,350			
Interest, commission, and discount.....	157,010			
Caracas waterworks.....		138,869	147,056	317,455
Sundries.....	17,048	2,924	3,160	
Total.....	48,643,211	51,450,917	48,313,839	33,429,825

^a Five bolivars taken as equal to the United States dollar.

Revenue Itemized from 1895 to 1898

Source: Veloz Goiticoa, Handbook of Venezuela (Washington: Bureau of American Republics, 1904), p. 409.

1. Salvador de la Plaza, El problema de la tierra (Mexico: Fuente Cultural, 1947), p. 14.

2. G. M. L. Brown, "The Industrial and Commercial Outlook on Venezuela," The Review of Reviews, vol. XXXI, no. 2 (New York, February, 1905) and "Cost of Living in Venezuela," The South American Journal (London, March 11, 1899), p. 269.

3. Brito Figueroa, Ibid., p. 293 (table).

From 1891 onward, $14\frac{1}{2}\%$ of that revenue was to be appropriated for the payment of the country's debt, evaluated that year at 22,693,000 dollars, 7,500,000 dollars for the domestic debt, and 13,450,000 dollars for the foreign debt,¹ a lancinating problem that caused a continuous drainage of funds, made even more severe by three consecutive years of budgetary deficit (1895-1898).²

At the turn of the century, Venezuela's credit abroad was in a most precarious position, while the total value of the country's trade had reached its lowest point in forty years: seventy million bolívars--twelve million dollars.³ This particular factor was an effect of the general recession period in the world's trade, exemplified by a drop in coffee prices; it was also, however, the sign of ruined land.

A land so poor, that the possession and use of a mule to carry the water containers--the daily water supply--into a household, was considered a factor of wealth.⁴ A land where civil war had become such a habitual occurrence that the compiling historian Manuel Landaeta Rosales, in a strange aberration of taxonomy, was able to report that between October 28, 1899 and May 30, 1900, without counting invasions from abroad, ninety-three (93) feats of arms had taken place, classified as battles,

1. Veloz Goiticoa, Handbook, op. cit., p. 423.

2. Veloz, op. cit., pp. 237, 241, 243.

3. See Appendix VI.

4. Evidence from the author's own family recollections.

when casualties on both sides exceeded one hundred, combats when casualties ranged from ten to one hundred, and shoot-outs when casualties did not exceed ten. Three "battles," fifth-three "combats" and thirty-seven "shoot-outs" had thus been recorded, episodes that seemed to come right out of some forgotten medieval chronicle:

On March 20, 1900, a shoot-out took place in Garabot, Portuguesa state, opposing General Carlos Baldo to the revolutionary Nogueras brothers who lost.¹

On March 23, 1900, a combat took place in the "Mountain of the Roses," near the village of Chuao, in the Aragua state, between Generals Fermin Udís, Francisco Nava Alcántara and Alejandro Rodríguez, against the seditious elements who had risen in arms there, who were slaughtering cattle, and who were soon disbanded.

And yet, and yet; despite its ruin, despite its wretched situation, Venezuela was still the land that Christopher Columbus had once mistaken for the Garden of Eden. "Venezuela is abundantly wealthy in natural resources, and needs only to develop them,"² ^{Edwin Plumacher,} wrote U. S. Consul in Maracaibo, of all U. S. officials sent to Venezuela in that period the one who had best come to know the country

1. Landaeta Rosales was reporting here the events that took place at the time of José Manuel Hernández's revolt against Cipriano Castro. The total number of casualties amounted to 3,100, a fairly high figure. This report is part of the papers of the Landaeta Rosales Archives, National Academy of History, Caracas, under the title "Hechos de armas librados en Venezuela desde el 28 de Octubre de 1899 hasta el 30 de Mayo de 1900."

2. Edwin H. Plumacher, in "Review of Trade Conditions in Venezuela, 1908," United States Manufacturers Bureau, Commercial Relations, 1908 (Washington, 1909), vol. 2, pp. 393-400.

and its problems. "Venezuela has its wealth still unexploited,"¹ wrote another source.

Caracas, resting at the foot of Mount Ávila, the coastal extremity of the Andean ridge, was invariably called the "Paris of South America," tropically beautiful.² "And in the midst of all its misery, there was a common folk who laughed at its own misfortunes and made jokes out of its own tears,"³ for as the anonymous refrain said:

El cantar tiene sentido,
Oye cuñao!
Entendimiento y razon.

To sing is to show good sense,
 Understanding and reason.

1. A. E. Delfino, "Resources and Industries of Venezuela," American Republics Bureau, Monthly Bulletin, vol. 7, pt. 1 (Washington, 1899), pp. 676-678.

2. See, for instance, Richard H. Davis, Three Gringos in Venezuela and Central America (New York, 1896).

3. Federico Landaeta, Nueve lustros y cuatro generales (Caracas: Impresores Unidos, 1944), p. 12.

The Mexican scholar Leopoldo Zea once wrote that "Latin Americans saw in Positivism a redeeming philosophical doctrine. It presented itself to them as the ideal instrument for achieving a total mental emancipation and, thus, a new social and political order. Positivism presented itself to them as the adequate philosophical grounding upon which to build a new mental order."¹

The lessons of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin consecrated a method of thought which found in Latin America an original application, and allowed the development of a self-asserted cultural epoch, independent from its European model. The concepts of evolution and materialistic determinism were readily accepted and generalized, Comte's new "Positive Religion" finding its ultimate embodiment in the establishment of a Positivist state: Brazil. . . . "Ordem e progresso," "Order and Progress."

The introduction of Positivism in Venezuela was, essentially, the work of one man: Dr. Adolf Ernst, a German professor at the University of Leipzig, who came to Venezuela in 1861, and was appointed to the Chair . . . of Natural History at the Central University of Caracas by President Guzmán Blanco in 1874. Through his teaching, and that of

1. Leopoldo Zea, Dos etapas del pensamiento en hispano-america, del romanticismo al positivismo (Mexico, 1949), p. 45.

his Venezuelan colleague in research, Dr. Rafael Villavicencio, a generation of brilliance was formed. ^{They included} men, all born within a fifteen-year span,¹ who, like Lisandro Alvarado, Luís Razetti, Santos Dominici, José Gil Fortoul, or Nicomédés Zuloaga, were direct university disciples, or who, like César Zumeta and, later, Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, or Pedro Manuel Arcaya, were influenced by the new doctrine outside of the university circle.

The "new mental order" offered by the methodical rational outline of the scientific philosophy could satisfy the generation's will to explain its position ^{scientifically} on the levels of social and individual existence. Scientific determinism attempted to free the Venezuelan man from the political and social myth that had been his history.

As César Zumeta affirmed: "The constitutional and legal framework of the so-called liberal regime achieved the unconceivable absurdity of a demagogic caesarism, in which a man, or an oligarchy, reigned with utter disregard for any form of law."²

1. Luís Razetti (1862-1932), José Gil Fortoul (1861-1943), Nicomédés Zuloaga (1860-1933), Lisandro Alvarado (1867-1940), César Zumeta (1860-1955), Laureano Vallenilla Lanz (1870-1936), Pedro Manuel Arcaya (1874-1958). Data from Luís Beltrán Guerrero, Introducción al positivismo venezolano (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1956).

2. César Zumeta, La ley del cabestro (New York, 1902), p. 8.

The new scientific methodology ^{coolly} observed Venezuela as a phenomenon. Lisandro Alvarado initiated studies in anthropology. Luis Razetti, one of Venezuela's greatest doctors, promoted the ideas of Darwin, and wrote a Code of Medical Ethics, which was adopted by most Latin American countries.¹ Through Gustave Le Bon's theories on social psychology, through the determinants of race and geographical environment derived from Count Gobineau and Hippolyte Taine, a school of historical and sociological investigation was born.² Its chief exponents were José Gil Fortoul in history, Laureano Vallenilla Lanz and Pedro Manuel Arcaya in sociology.

The Positivist generation met with immediate recognition. Venezuela's tradition of freemasonry and laicism, by taking precedence over the dogmas of the Catholic Church, particularly under Guzmán Blanco's presidency, enabled the free development of the theory and its conclusions. Academic institutionalization was ^{immediately} granted. In 1869, the Academy of Social Sciences was founded, followed in 1873 by the Academy of Language, in 1889 by the Academy of History and in 1904 by the Academy of Medicine. All were devoted to scientific investigation, whose ^{spirit} found its cultured

1. Francisco A. Ríquez, Biografía del Dr. Luis Razetti (Caracas, 1932).

2. See William W. Pierson, "Foreign Influences on Venezuelan Political Thought 1830-1930," Hispanic American Historical Review, vol. 15, no. 1 (Durham, February, 1935).

expression in El Cojo Ilustrado, a periodical which became the chief patron of the new Venezuelan writing.

The Romantic myth--exemplified by such classical works as Eduardo Blanco's Venezuela heroica, a series of beautifully written sketches on the Wars of Independence, pages of stirring epic glory, a belated chanson de geste--was reacted against and destroyed by this questioning spirit, by this urge for scientific reform.

The new "intelligentsia" sought to observe and resolve. Similar statements invariably came up. "What an English thinker once called 'political fiber' is an atrophied element in our political organism, and we need many years of normality so that a correct functioning may revitalize the fiber."¹ "There is no way out for these Latin American countries other than through the natural increase of the population, immigration and the import of foreign capital."² César Zumeta, in 1900, even outlined a proposal for the colonization of Guayana.³

The observations made on the Venezuelan historical process have proved accurate to the present day. Even though the philosophical conclusions derived from the observations resulted in eminently "conservative" views, conservative insofar as the process of development was denied any

1. José Gil Fortoul, Letter of June 20, 1892 in Epistolario de Gil Fortoul a Lisandro Alvarado, publicado por Aníbal Lisandro Alvarado (Barquisimeto: Imprenta del Estado, 1956), p. 189.

2. Gil Fortoul, Letter of April 27, 1899, in ibid., p. 226.

3. César Zumeta, "Un proyecto de colonización para Guayana," BAHM, Año I, no. 5 (Caracas, Marzo-Abril de 1960).

change in structure, Venezuela's political and social evolution, as described by authors like Vallenilla Lanz or Gil Fortoul, expounded themes that are now those of the new Latin American "Marxist school."¹

The social reformism of Venezuela's Positivist generation did not lead to the establishment of a technocratic body of councillors, in the image of Porfirio Díaz's científicos. Yet, the generation's influence did have direct effects, as on juridical matters.²

however,

The foremost change, however, was cultural. For the first time, there appeared a coherent correlation between Venezuela's problems and their explanation. The political mirage of democracy, constitutionality and federation was dissolved. What remained was a set of factual observations out of which a theory was construed.

Vallenilla Lanz, to the outrage of many of his contemporaries, called the process of Venezuela's independence a racial civil war.³ Gil Fortoul, on his part, claimed that "Tropical America's basic problem was not political but exclusively ethnographic and social."⁴ A change in the focus

1. As an example see Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "Seven Erroneous Theses about Latin America," New University Thought, vol. 4, no. 4 (Winter 1966/67), particularly his analysis of thesis no. 1.

2. Pedro Manuel Arcaya was, for many years, President of Venezuela's Supreme Court.

3. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, Cesarismo Democrático, op. cit., Chapter I.

4. José Gil Fortoul, "El hombre y la historia," Obras completas, tomo IV (Caracas, 1961), p. 429.

of explanation had succeeded in destroying the old myths.

The irreducible conclusions of the deterministic doctrine have been rejected, today, as binding inaccuracies. Nevertheless, the method of scientific investigation remains basically unchanged in its structure, if not in its goals.

The theory of Venezuela's social, and therefore historical, development, defined by the positivist generation, was grounded on the following reasoning: material, and therefore social, progress could only be achieved through social, and therefore political, order--a fair wish; such a political order was necessarily conditioned by the past historical tradition; therefore the caudillo was the inevitable political resultant for the future as he had been in the past. For the positivists, the ideal ruler would be a caudillo capable of levelling off the flux of the nation's political upheavals. He would be a "Democratic Caesar," a Caesar because he would bring order, and democratic because akin to the masses. "Venezuelan Folk," once exclaimed Vallenilla Lanz, "you yourself have produced those who have tyrannized you, they all are the offspring of your own womb."¹

The major flaw of the theory resulted from a strict subordination of cultural patterns to biological-quasi-chemical sets of reactions that left no room for contingency in social development. This fatalistic rationalization of history

1. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, "Cuadernos," p. 7; Vallenilla Lanz Archives, Paris.

allowed no grounds for the possible roots of an historical change. In an a priori rationality, the self-defining flow of history has been eliminated. The cultural theory of Venezuela's history had come to deny the historical concept itself.

What then was the cultural meaning of the Venezuelan man in 1900? In other words, how was one to define the Venezuelan man at the turn of the century? Could he be found in this cultured elite, conscious of its identity, by no means estranged from the rest of the population, yet, foreign in its formation? Like all its contemporary Latin American counterparts, the Venezuelan elite was culturally turned towards Europe, particularly France. All these men had travelled, lived, or studied there; Zumeta spent most of his life outside of Venezuela; Gil Fortoul even spoke Spanish with an undefinable foreign accent.¹

Or was the Venezuelan man to emerge from the romantic myths of an erroneous tradition? Or would he come from the social awareness of a class-conscious population? A Marxian class-consciousness had triggered both the Wars of Independence and the Federal Wars. Yet, today, this social awareness is not found. Had social equalitarianism, a sympathetic fact,²

1. Evidence from the author's family recollections.

2. Among the Positivist generation, there were those who, like Vallenilla Lanz or Arcaya descended, from eminent patrician families; but also those who, like César Zumeta, were of an extremely modest background.

blurred the line between the awareness of income and status inequalities on one hand, and the existence of an ideal classless society on the other?

This author does not believe there is a direct rational explanation for this phenomenon. By 1899, the Venezuelan man existed--insofar as a common process of historical development--then, finally, defined--characterized 2,550,000 individuals. And yet, of these 2,550,000 only a tiny number had come to understand such a process.

It is, perhaps, this absence of an historical prise de conscience from the population as a whole, at a time when its determinant factors had been outlined, which accounts for Venezuela's situation today.

The hypothesis on Venezuela's historical development, which we seek to present in this study, is construed from the fact that Venezuela reaches its political integration with the arrival of Cipriano Castro to power. Phenomenally, Castro's invasion was the logical requital of an entire region over its former longlasting exploitation. Castro, the new caudillo had come to power with promises of law, order and liberalism. A reaction took place against him--the flux--but was controlled. The event: a revolution, was defeated. A period of thirty-two years (1903-1935) of a uniform rule ensued. Politically, it was the end of an era. Regional caudillism gradually disappeared, while a new economic variable, oil, appeared. Out of the even integration burst a new political consciousness. The cultural element, however, was lost.

The Venezuelan social revolution of the 1930's, in that it structured a new class hierarchy, a new set of values, was not followed by a self-identifying cultural counterpart. The timeless relation between man and the land was lost without a whimper, probably because the Venezuelan man had never been able to harmonize with his environment on terms of an equal balance. The Latin American man, the Venezuelan man--and this is one of the keenest observations that the Positivist generation ever made--had always been, is still, overwhelmed by his surroundings, both natural and circumstantial. Devoid of control from within, his life is an irrational and relentless drift.

CHAPTER XI

EARLY DISENCHANTMENTS: OCTOBER 1899-JANUARY 1900

As night fell on that fateful October Sunday, the Plaza Bolívar was illuminated. In the Casa Amarilla, by the glittering light of crystal chandeliers, amidst the sound of silverware on plates and the even rumble of animated conversations, a banquet was being offered to the new leader:

Potage crème d'asperges . . . Timbale de pigeonneau Lucullus
. . . Filet de boeuf à la Richelieu . . .¹

Lifting his glass, Benjamin Ruíz, or Rafael Bolívar as he was now called, proposed the opening toast to "the Glorious Head of the Revolution." Cipriano Castro answered by renewing his promise to^{do}/whatever would be humanly possible for the good of the fatherland, "with the help of all its dutiful sons."² And the Cordon Rouge champagne added to the general euphoria.

After the banquet, Castro retired with a small group of intimates to an adjoining salon. Among them were those of the new coterie, Tello Mendoza, Torres Cárdenas, Corao, and the Valencia journalist Manuel Pimentel Coronel; several newcomers like Gumersindo Rivas, a Puerto Rican, established in Caracas for some time; or old acquaintances like the portly Efraín Rendiles, a native of Maracaibo, a one-time consul in Curaçao, also a one-time owner of a small hotel in Caracas that

1. Recepción del General Cipriano Castro: Valencia-Caracas, op. cit., p. 54.

2. Ibid.

Castro had once used as a lodging in his days as deputy for his home province.

After greeting him warmly, Castro drew Rendiles aside.

"You know these rich Caracas people. Whom do you think I should choose as Minister of Finance?"¹ Rendiles paused and started giving out names. First on the list was that of Manuel Antonio Matos. The conversation was overheard by Pimentel Coronel who turned to Rendiles: "What kind of inanities are you suggesting?" "What you need, General," he then said to Castro, "is a man in front of whom you will not feel ashamed the day you ask him for a loan of one hundred thousand pesos to buy a hacienda." Then, pointing at Tello Mendoza who was standing nearby. "What you need is a man like him."² Outside, the merry atmosphere pervaded. The Plaza Bolívar remained crowded until late into the night.³ Caracas now resembled a bivouac camp.

The following morning, at about ten thirty, in the "Elliptical Salon" of the Federal Capitol, a block away from the Casa Amarilla, General Victor Rodríguez officially "placed the Government of the Republic into the hands of the Head of the Revolution."⁴ At noon, General José Manuel Hernández was

1. This scene is described in Fernando González, op. cit., p. 80.

2. Ibid.

3. Recepción, op. cit., p. 55.

4. "El General Victor Rodríguez en el solio de los Presidentes," BAHM, Año I, no. 1, pp. 117 & ff.

officially freed and was escorted to the Casa Amarilla, followed by a continuous ovation. Both Castro and Hernández appeared at the balcony in front of the Plaza Bolívar. It rained, one of those violent October showers that mark the end of the rainy season.¹ Yet, the crowd that, again, had filled the square kept cheering at the solemn proclamations. Hernández spoke first, ending by a hearty

Long live the people of Venezuela!
 Long live the glorious Restoration Army!
 Long live General Cipriano Castro!

Castro then answered . . .

Long live liberty!
 Long live General Jose Manuel Hernández!²

That same afternoon, the new cabinet was formed. With the exception of Tello Mendoza, who was appointed to Finances, a position which he was to occupy almost continually throughout the Castro years, all the other ministers were old timers of the Venezuelan political scene, including men such as the former President Andueza Palacio, or General Victor Rodríguez himself. The "Mocho" Hernández, on his part, was given the post of Minister of Development. Not a single andino occupied a position in the new government. "The commanders and officers of the Restoration Army," said Castro, "are genuine patriots whose only ambition is to see the Andes definitively integrated

1. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 27.

2. Documentos para la historia de la Revolución Liberal Restauradora de Venezuela (Cúcuta: Tipografía Miguel C. Lascano, 1899), pp. 8-9.

into the life of the nation."¹ As Ignacio Andrade was to write from his exile: "Venezuela's history always moves within a vicious circle: the same men, the same passions, the same happenings."²

Still, the hour of disenchantment had not yet arrived. On October 25, a group of young intellectuals of the Positivist generation presented a manifesto of adherence to Castro. "Your words . . . express the aspirations of all decent Venezuelans . . . We come to offer you our help for the realization of that program which sums up our most cherished ideals."³

Enthusiasms were soon gradually sobered up. The following day, October 26, General José Manuel Hernández wrote a public letter to Castro, denouncing the fact that "in all rude frankness, the present cabinet, in its majority, did not correspond to the aspirations of the Revolution that demanded political and administrative morality; consequently, he refused his nomination to the Ministry of Development."⁴ At dawn on the 27th, he left Caracas for the neighbouring village of Las Tejerías, and declared himself in revolt. He then issued a theatrical proclamation:

1. Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 106.

2. Andrade, Porque triunfó la Revolución Restauradora? op. cit., p. 84.

3. Recepcion del General Cipriano Castro, op. cit., pp. 85-89. Among those who signed the manifesto were: Luís Razetti, Santos Dominici, Pedro Emilio Coll, Pablo Acosta Ortiz, Elías Toro, etc . . .

4. Documentos para la historia, op. cit., p. 9.

To the Venezuelans!

The Revolution has not triumphed!

The Revolution does not want renewed banditism within its government, . . . General Cipriano Castro, in violation of his word, has merely consecrated the same clique that was the indubitable origin of all the recent misfortunes of the Fatherland.

Soldiers of the national Revolution!

You have been betrayed! . . . by giving in to our enemies, Castro has become a traitor . . . Freedom still demands from its best sons the contingents of their strength and of their blood, to seal once and for all the process of our civil wars. Let us save the Republic from ruin and dishonour.¹

On the night of the 27th, General Samuel Acosta, who had just been appointed Day Commander of the town's garrison, left Caracas to join Hernández with the division he commanded.² The "Mocho" however, had committed an incredible blunder. By leaving the capital on the 27th and choosing to revolt in the backlands, he was cutting himself away from an immediate and almost assured success. Castro was, indeed, scheduled to appear at a gala performance of La Dame aux Camélias, as part of the ceremonies which were taking place on Simon Bolívar's name day--October 28.³ That same day, a decree was issued, that consecrated the autonomy of the twenty Venezuelan states as it had been determined by the resolution voted upon earlier that year.⁴ Cipriano Castro, in fact, now acknowledged the

1. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

2. Briçño Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 106.

3. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 82.

4. Perera, op. cit., p. 224.

the same pretext that he had used to justify his own revolution.

Hernández's revolt quickly extended to the numerous "Mochista" groups scattered throughout the country, and the confusion of a renewed general fighting, an extended series of guerrilla warfare operations, prevailed. The main thrust was set against Hernández himself. The divisions sent after him were placed under the command of General Natividad Mendoza, Luciano Mendoza's brother. And the chase began. By mid-December, a major encounter took place near Tocuyito, the former battle site. Hernández, who disposed of a force of about four thousand,¹ opposed a stiff resistance. Yet, the governmental troops managed to occupy the heights of El Alto de Uzlar, overlooking Tocuyito, and thereby forced Hernández to retreat;² and the pursuit was resumed.

A few days later, while the troops were bivouacking near the small hamlet of Tinaquillo, provoked by the repeated advances that General Celestino Peraza, the Army Chief of Staff recently incorporated to the campaign, was making to his mistress who accompanied him in the expedition, General Natividad Mendoza stormed into Peraza's room with a gun in his hand. Peraza shot first; Mendoza was mortally wounded. Peraza was then recalled to Caracas.³ No further action was

1. Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., p. 272.

2. Pablo Grillet Relación de Tocuyito, Alto de Uzlar y Tinaquillo.

3. Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., pp. 224-225.

taken but a new command had to be provided. It was given to Generals José Antonio Dávila and Julio Montenegro. And the chase resumed. Finally, in May 1900, after nearly seven months of continuous fighting, Hernández was captured by Dávila's troops, and his revolt quelled. Both the "Mocho" and Acosta were brought back to Caracas and sent to the Rotunda prison.

In the meantime, Castro had been forced to come to terms with an independent nest of resistance that had developed in the port town of Puerto Cabello. On September 16, 1899, from his provisional headquarters in La Victoria, President Ignacio Andrade has assigned the command of the Puerto Cabello garrison and fort, the "Castillo Libertador," to the young General Antonio Paredes.¹ Paredes was the direct descendant of Diego García de Paredes, Grán Capitán in the armies of his Catholic Majesty, King Ferdinand of Spain. The son of an hidalgo, gallant, proud and handsome, schooled in the French military academy of Saint-Cyr,² Antonio Paredes was an aristocrat in the full sense of the word, true to his heritage and what it stood for: an almost mythical sense of honour, righteousness, courage and duty.

1. "Revolución Restauradora acaudillada por el General Cipriano Castro," p. 48, Landaeta Rosales Archives, Caracas.

2. Ramon J. Velásquez, Prologue to Como llegó Cipriano Castro al poder, by Antonio Paredes (Caracas: Garrido, 1954), pp. XI-XII.

Paredes had singularized himself in Venezuela's political scene by opposing the "Mocho" Hernandez's drive for power after the 1897 election. In a series of newspaper articles, he had exposed the "Mocho" as being nothing more than a bumbling fool whose prestige rested solely on the credulity and inherent stupidity of those who followed him.¹ At that time, his voice had stood out as that of the prophet claiming in the desert.

And now, once again, he stood alone. He had pledged his solidarity to Andrade and his government, and would not change his stand. Even after Andrade's departure, he remained entrenched behind the walls of the Puerto Cabello fortress, in a fruitless and defiant resistance, ignoring the pleas from the harbour's major trading houses to allow commercial operations to be resumed.²

On October 26, Andrade wrote him from his exile in Barbados, relieving him of all obligations, and urging him to give in. While a temporary blockade was declared on Puerto Cabello, negotiations were started. The ubiquitous Rafael Bolívar headed the government's delegation. An agreement on surrender was promptly being arrived at when Paredes happened to find out about Bolívar's double identity. Furious, he declared the agreement null and void "for having been signed

1. These articles were recollectd in a pamphlet Un prestigio que se va (Caracas, 1899).

2. "Revolución Restauradora . . .," op. cit., p. 52.

under a false name"¹ and had "this Ruíz-Bolívar" placed under arrest.

On the following day, November 8, Castro announced his intention of proceeding with an open attack upon the fortress. "I am waiting for you to prove to you that I am going to kill you, and will kill all those who will dare to come in here by force,"² was Paredes' answer, the answer of a medieval knight, strangely out of place in a world of unheroics. The attack on Puerto Cabello was delayed, but finally took place on November 12. Paredes had previously agreed to release "this Ruíz-Bolívar." After thirteen hours of combat, the fortress surrendered.³

The prison castle of San Carlos stands on a small island, about one hundred kilometres--sixty miles--north of Maracaibo, on the bar that separates the lake proper from the sea-gulf. A grim construction, dating back to the Colonial Period, its dark, gloomy cells, built below the sea-level are invaded by water at high tide.

San Carlos was, for many, the scene of a long and squalid agony into death and rot. It was there that Antonio Paredes was sent. His feet were chained together with a set

1. Note from General Antonio Paredes to General Cipriano Castro, November 7, 1899. *Revolución Restauradora* . . . "ibid., p. 54.

2. Telegram from General Antonio Paredes to General Cipriano Castro, November 10, 1899, ibid., p. 56.

3. Ibid., p. 62.

of iron bars, grillos, as was then the custom. There he remained, joined several months later by the "Mocho" Hernández and Samuel Acosta who had been transferred from Caracas.¹

On November 2, 1899, Juan Vicente Gómez and the bulk of the Restoration Army arrived in Caracas.² This arrival only contributed to increase the confusion that had already marred the early days of the new regime. Bands of andinos, the rank and file of the May invasion now aimlessly roamed the streets of the capital. Drunken brawls and bloody fights constantly erupted. The newcomers were generally regarded with suspicion, sometimes even with hostility. They, in turn, felt lost in this strange surrounding, far away from their native land, with their ambitions unfulfilled for the most part, and looking with disappointment towards their leader who now seemed so far remote. Had Castro, like Hannibal in Capua, forgotten these who had given him his victory? Gómez, who, on December 8, was appointed to the key post of Governor of the Federal District of Caracas, was the placid confident of these mounting resentments. He would dismiss them with a kind word and a promise to speak to Don Cipriano. He also generously distributed morocotas (one hundred bolívar gold coins) to those who needed them most. Passions were

1. During his stay in prison, Paredes kept a diary, Diario de mi prisión en San Carlos (Trinidad, 1901), which, to this day, remains a vivid document on the prowesses of human resistance.

2. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 34.

soothed.

At the moment, Castro's preoccupation was to end the Hernández rebellion as soon as possible. The press, according to him, was doing little to help pacify the republic. One of the major Caracas dailies, El Tiempo, who did not hide its "Mochista" sympathies, was closed down, and reopened under a new editorial board that "would not be concerned with the country's politics."¹ A strict censorship was thereupon established.

The chief concern, however, remained that of finding money in order to finance the new campaign. The treasury was empty. "Let us then ask money to those who can and must give," proposed Castro. "First, the rich revolutionaries, so, that way, we will keep their money from getting into Hernández's hands; then the Banks . . .; then the friends who can help us and who, I do not believe, will deny their efforts to consolidate the triumph of our Cause."²

To that effect, in early December, Manuel Antonio Matos, together with the board of directors of the Banco Caracas, was called to a meeting of the cabinet. Mr. Matos, who still looked upon Castro as the man he had brought to power, "benevolently" recommended that the customs offices be reorganised, thereby assuring the government with a stable source of revenue

1. El Tiempo (Caracas, November 21, 1899) as quoted in Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 90.

2. As recorded in Carlos Benito Figueredo, Presidenciales (Madrid: El Liberal, 1908) pp. 112-113.

to spend. He then offered to negotiate a loan from his bank for the amount of one million bolívars--\$200,000.¹ Tensions were momentarily eased, and, as the century drew to a close, on December 30, 1899, a banquet was held in honour of General Castro,² a gesture that seemed, at least, to consecrate the Liberal Restoration and its leader who, guided by the lights of liberalism and science, would hopefully bring Venezuela to a new age of peace and prosperity. For the new year, a general amnesty was signed, most political prisoners were freed. The prisons, though, were soon to be filled up again.³

On January 2, Mr. Matos was, again, called to a meeting of the cabinet. The loan granted by the Banco Caracas had proved insufficient, and the response from private contributors had been far from satisfactory. The demand for money was now made pressing. Again, Matos argued that the country's appalling financial situation rendered the government's demands impossible to meet;⁴ to which Dr. Andueza Palacio, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, abruptly replied: "There is money, and it is being denied to the government. Well, if it is not to be given graciously, it will have to be forced out."⁵ Taken aback by the rebuke, Matos retired and left,

1. Matos, Notas, op. cit., pp. 73 and 78.

2. Briceno Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 110. A number of young intellectuals participated in the offering. Among them: Jose Gil Fortoul, Santos Dominici, Pedro Emilio Coll, etc. . .

3. Manuel Landaeta Rosales, Anales de las carceles de Caracas (Caracas, 1906), p. 35.

4. Matos, Notas, op. cit., p. 73.

5. Ibid.

the following day, with his family for his house on the sea shore, at the Macuto beach resort near La Guaira.

There, he wrote to Castro, urging him not to take extreme measures. "The effect that will be produced in the country . . . by measures of repression will only contribute to take away from it the credit it to badly needs both at home and abroad."¹ Castro answered by renewing his pleas that Matos help in assuring the triumph of the Liberal Cause, presently imperiled on the battlefield:² a pompous sort of rhetoric that now sounded curiously hollow. Matos, who had been informed that several of his friends had already been arrested, or had "subscribed"³ under pressure, replied, blaming what had occurred on the initiative of unscrupulous cabinet members, unworthy of their gallant leader.⁴ Castro this time did not reply but asked that Matos return to Caracas for further consultation. On the morning of January 8, as he stepped down from the La Guaira train station, Manuel Antonio Matos was courteously escorted to the Rotunda prison and locked up in "an obscure dungeon."⁵

Several days later, Matos, together with the other directors of his bank, with those of the Banco de Venezuela

1. Manuel A. Matos, Letter of January 4, 1900, in ibid., pp. 74-75.

2. Cipriano Castro, Letter of January 5, 1900, in ibid., pp. 76-77.

3. Note to M. A. Matos, January 5, 1900, in ibid., pp. 81-82.

4. Manuel A. Matos, Letter of January 6, 1900 in ibid., pp. 77-81.

5. Matos, Notas, ibid., p. 82.

and with some of the more prominent Caracas merchants, was reescorted between a double row of soldiers to the train station, on his way to the San Carlos fortress.¹ As the group was arriving at the station, a counter-order came. Castro had simply wanted to scare, and, in a way, publicly ridicule those who already thought they were entering history as the martyrs of a noble cause. In full view of a now teasing crowd, Matos was brought back to the Rotunda, and locked up in "El Tigrito" (the "Little Tiger"), the darkest, filthiest and most putrid cell in the entire prison.²

There remained no other solution but to yield. The loan was granted. Matos personally greeted Castro at the door of the Banco Caracas headquarters. A similar visit was paid to the Banco de Venezuela. The bank's president, Don Bernardo Lassere, who had succeeded Matos' brother-in-law Martin H. Pérez, assured that such a visit would contribute "to reaffirm the close ties and perfect harmony that existed between the government and that institution."³ It was also decided that an additional "war tax" would be levied on certain goods imported and exported. It affected particularly the imports of wheat and flour, and the exports of coffee, cocoa and hides.⁴ The tax had a disastrous effect on the

1. Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 92.

2. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 30. José Rafael Pocatererra in his Memorias de un Venezolano de la decadencia gives a vivid description of the cell. Pictures illustrate the text and corroborate the author's affirmations.

3. As quoted in Nuñez, op. cit., p. 31.

4. Louis Goldschmidt, "Additional Tariff in Venezuela," Consular Reports, vol. 62, no. 234 (Mardi 1900), pp. 372-373.

country's already sagging trade, as purchases were now reduced to bare indispensables.¹

Manuel Antonio Matos, on his part thought, perhaps, that Castro was no longer the king he had, once, carried in his cart. He ^{never} forgot the humiliating affront he had been subjected to. And, as the period approached for what was expected to be the merriest Carnival celebration Caracas had ever known,² a greeting to the new century, but also a convenient excuse to keep minds away from current problems, Mr. Matos retired to the elaboration of plans that carried heavy forebodings for the future.

1. Frederick de Sola, "New Tariff Decree in Venezuela," Consular Reports, vol. 63, no. 237 (June 1900), p. 241.

2. Traditionally, the Carnival celebration was in the Colonial Period the only public holiday apart from religious festivities. During its celebration, slaves and masters could mingle freely. Thus an almost unreal sense of joy prevailed. There was some debate as to whether the twentieth century actually started in January 1900 or in the first year, 1901. 1900 was the final choice.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEVER ENDING TURMOIL OF CIVIL DISORDER: JANUARY 1900-JANUARY 1901

Throughout the year 1900, Venezuela was caught in the never ending turmoil of civil disorders. Cipriano Castro had seized power, but he had not pacified the country. The Hernández rebellion was setting an open challenge to his authority, and, in the provinces, those caudillos who had not joined the "Mochó" looked questioningly at this little andino who now proposed to lead the nation's destiny.

To the east, by the oriental coastline and downwards, by the mouths of the Orinoco river stood the towering figures of Generals Nicolás Rolando and Zoilo Vidal, nicknamed "El Caribe." To the west, by the sandy shores and mountainous backlands of the Falcón state stood those of General Amabile Solagnie, of the old General José Gregorio Riera and of his son Gregorio Segundo. Staunch supporters of the Liberal Party, they had all pledged their orthodox allegiance to Guzmán Blanco and later, to Crespo. Now, in the personality vacuum that had been created, they waited: was Castro the true liberal he proclaimed himself to be? The Andes region as a whole had the reputation of a bastion for anti-liberalism. Would Castro, then, not try to set up an andino domination over the entire country?

A compromise was worked out.¹ A promise was made to

1. For details on these negotiations, see "Papeles del General Nicolás Rolando," BAHM, Año II, no. 16 (Caracas, Enero-Febrero 1962), pp. 31-64, "El primer año del siglo XX," BAHM, Año VI, no. 32 (Caracas, Septiembre-Octubre 1964), pp. 3-54 and Francisco Jiménez Arraíz, De relieve para la historia (Trinidad, 1903).

these local leaders, to these warlords, that their respective terrains of influence would be maintained intact. The reconfirmation decree on provincial autonomy of October 28, 1899 was a step in that direction. At first, guided by their anti"Mochista" feeling, many of these caudillos gave their support to the Restoration. The prevailing climate, though, was one of half-hearted commitment, if not altogether of open suspicion. Every ship now docking into port could be bringing in loads of arms and ammunition; every mule train found trotting on one of those dusty roads could be carrying those arms to some local band; and every fire spotted in the night could have signaled the camp of some group of improvised revolutionaries.

In the west, whereas the Zulia state had immediately followed Castro, the Andean states, and more particularly the Táchira had remained loyal to the defunct Andrade government.¹ Since Castro and his partisans had left for the central lowlands, Juan Pablo Peñaloza had reasserted his authority as State President. The Táchira, paradoxically, remained the only administrative unit theoretically to oppose Castro now that he was in power. Negotiations on a peaceful settlement were initiated at the end of the year 1899.² In February

1. See "La situación excepcional del Táchira en 1899 y 1900," BAHM, Año IV, no. 19-21 (Caracas, Julio-Diciembre 1962), pp. 51-176.

2. Ibid.

1900, Castro decided to appoint Juan Vicente Gómez Military and Civil commander for the Táchira, and sent him back with the troops that were idly stationed in Caracas. The dissatisfied andino contingents were thus conveniently disposed of. Gómez arrived in San Cristóbal in the first days of March. Little more than a token resistance was opposed to his comeback. Peñaloza relinquished his powers and stepped down.¹ In his usual conciliatory manner, Don Juan Vicente calmed the worries of his fellow countrymen.

Leaders, Officers, Soldiers of my Army,
You now return to your homes. If, after having achieved the most remarkable campaign that has ever been recorded in the pages of our political history, you return with your bodies still covered by the same rags you wore when you left, it is also true that your foreheads are wreathed with the undying laurels of victory, conquered in the battlefields through your brave and bold conduct.²

Gómez cleverly played his number two-man role and was able to capitalize on his own growing popularity. Under his administration, the Táchira was at least relieved from its political fears if not of its economic hardships. In the early months of 1900, a small-pox epidemic originated in the harbour-town of Maracaibo and quickly spread southward, bringing death and ruin to a region that was already beginning to

1. See "La llegada de Gómez al Táchira," BAHM, Año II, no. 13 (Caracas, Julio-Agosto 1961), pp. 23-27.

2. Juan Vicente Gómez, Proclamation of March 2, 1900 in Ramón Tello Mendoza, Ligeros rasgos del General Juan Vicente Gómez (Caracas: Tipografía Universal), p. 49.

suffer from the throes of depopulation.¹

And news came from Caracas. On February 27, Mardi Gras day,² an attempted assassination had been perpetrated on Castro while he was being driven through the streets of Caracas with his wife who had arrived in the capital a few days before.³ The shots that were fired missed, and Don Cipriano "magnanimously withheld the angry crowds from exerting physical violence on his would-be assassin"⁴ who was nonetheless tried and, later on, sent to San Carlos.

From his home town of Tariba, the old Dr. Santiago Briceño, one of Castro's former mentors in the latter's early political career,⁵ renewed his correspondence with his former disciple and friend, letters of sound advice: "time should come for an interregnum that would initiate, or prepare the

1. See "Epidemia de viruelas," BAHM, Año VI, no. 33 (Caracas, Noviembre-Diciembre 1964), pp. 77-84. The deteriorating condition of the region's coffee culture and the increasing drainage of men now enrolled for war caused a drastic decrease of the Andean population that was to reach its peak around the year 1910. See "La despoblacion del Táchira," BAHM, Año IV, no. 19-21 (Caracas, Julio-Diciembre 1962) pp. 229-232.

2. A curious detail: the total expense for preparations, illuminations, decorations for the 1900 Carnival which, by all accounts was one of the most glamorous ever seen in Caracas, amounted to only \$1,000. "Papeles de 1900," BAHM, Año VI, no. 35-36 (Caracas, Marzo-Abril 1965), p. 124.

3. "El viaje de Doña Zoila de Castro," BAHM, Año VI, no. 32 (Caracas, Septiembre-Octubre 1964), pp. 55-58.

4. "Un atentado contra el General Cipriano Castro," BAHM, Año I, no. 5 (Caracas, Marzo-Abril 1960), pp. 27-48. The assassin's name was Anselmo López, an apprentice in a baker-shop. At the time, it was said that the attempted assassination was part of a "Mochista" conspiracy to eliminate Castro. This was never proved. López and his employer, Francisco Marrero were both found guilty of attempted murder. Track was kept of them until their arrival at San Carlos in 1903. Nothing more was ever heard from them afterwards.

5. See page 66, note no. 2.

country's reorganization, when you convoke . . . a Congress of State Plenipotentiaries . . . to the effect of providing the country with a provisional statute which will be enforced while a new constitution is written and voted upon."¹ Dr. Briceño also reflected with increased concern on the situation that was developing in Colombia.

Whereas the Federal Wars had established in Venezuela the continuous rule of the Liberal Party as organised under Guzmán Blanco, Colombia had seen its position shift to the exclusive adoption of conservatism, primarily through the figure of President Rafael Nuñez, himself a former liberal, turned into one of the worst clerical reactionaries in the history of modern Latin America.²

The Liberals, who had been nearly wiped out of the political scene, reacted in 1895 by a bloody insurrection, subdued after several months of fighting. In 1898, elections were held, won by the conservatives, who supported the candidacy of the old Dr. Manuel A. Sanclemente, known for his conciliatory attitude.³ However, because of ill-health, Sanclemente proved incapable of assuming his tasks of office. The effective power

1. Santiago Briceño, Letter of May 1, 1900, in Briceño Ayestarán, *op. cit.*, p. 539.

2. For a brief survey, see Jesús Maria Henao, *History of Colombia* (translated by J. Fred Rippy) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), pp. 601-515. In 1886, a dericalist Centralist constitution replaced the liberal constitution of 1863, the "Federal Constitution of Rio Negro," the document that had inspired Venezuela's constitution of 1864.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 517-519.

rested in the hands of the vice-President, Dr. José Manuel Marroquín, who belonged to the most intransigent and intolerant faction of the conservative party.¹ An all-out political war was declared on the liberals who still remained in public office. The liberals, in turn, seeing the chief executive almost out of commission, and the government weakened because of financial difficulties, caused, in part, by the 1895 uprising, thought the time had come for renewed action.² On October 18, 1899, the central and northern departments of Santander, Cundinamarca and Tolima rose in arms. The revolt quickly extended. It was to prove the bloodiest of all the civil wars Colombia had ever endured, the "War of the Thousand Days" as it was called.³ The liberal forces were placed under the command of the young and dynamic General Rafael Uribe Uribe.⁴

During his various exiles in Colombia, Castro had been led, by affinity, to support the liberals in their struggle.⁵ On February 7, 1900 he appointed Benjamin Ruíz Military and Civil Commander of the Zulia state, bordering with Colombia on the west.⁶ Ruíz, himself a Colombian and a liberal, provided

1. Antoine Rougier, "Les récentes guerres civiles de la Colombie et du Vénézuéla" in Revue Générale de Droit International Public, hereafter referred to as RGDIPubl. (Paris, 1904), p. 266.

2. Henao, op. cit., p. 518.

3. The Colombian government decree declaring public order to be disturbed was issued on July 28, 1899 and the decree declaring public peace restored was issued on June 1, 1903.

4. Rougier, op. cit., p. 229.

5. The fact that Castro was, at first, a Conservative in the Venezuelan political spectrum was not inconsistent with his stand. A Venezuelan conservative, by Colombian standards could still rank as a liberal.

6. "Benjamin Ruíz y Rufino Blanco Fombona," BAHM, op. cit.

arms and sanctuary facilities to the insurgents and even helped direct an incursion on the frontier town of Cúcuta which was momentarily occupied by the Colombian liberal forces.¹ From the Táchira, General Peñaloza, before Gómez's arrival, had negotiated a two thousand rifle-arms deal with the revolutionaries.² Caracas tacitly approved. By April of 1900, the traffic between Venezuela and the Colombian liberals had taken major proportions as two small gunboats, the Rayo and the Augusto, were now used for the transportation of both arms and men.³ From May 11 to May 26, 1900, for sixteen days, 15,000 Colombian governmental troops and 14,000 liberal revolutionaries fought in what was to be the bloodiest battle of the entire war: Palonegro. The death toll amounted to over five thousand.⁴ The liberals were badly beaten. To avoid being crushed, Uribe Uribe and his troops sought refuge in Venezuela. The Castro government could no longer hide its open support to the rebellion.

By mid-1900, now that the Hernández revolt had been successfully ended, Don Cipriano could turn his mind to greater dreams of diplomacy and conquest. Several administrative

1. Correspondencia diplomática sobre violaciones de la neutralidad por las autoridades de Venezuela y sobre otros asuntos relacionados con el orden público en Venezuela (Bogotá 1902). Contra manifestación del Gobierno Colombiano (Bogotá 1902), quoted in Rougier, op. cit., p. 272.

2. Rougier, ibid.

3. The Rayo was originally a Nicaraguan torpedo-boat, bought in England, and then sent down to assist the Colombian liberal revolutionaries. Rougier, op. cit., p. 272.

4. Rougier, ibid., p. 229.

changes were made. Ruiz, who had fallen into an early disgrace, was recalled from the Zulia¹ while Gómez was replaced in the Táchira by Castro's older brother, Celestino--shades of Bonaparte sharing the cake of Europe with his next to kin. Gómez apparently resented the recall, but patiently carried on.² On July 31, a new cabinet was formed.³ For Castro, the major innovation was that he had convinced the prestigious Eduardo Blanco to accept the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Castro, like most of his contemporaries had read Venezuela Heroica, Blanco's epic view on the country's Wars of Independence, and had been carried away by the lyrical impetus of the powerful narrative. Blanco, who was now sixty-five, had been Páez's Aide-de-Camp, in his youth. In a way, he had come to represent the glory he had so beautifully depicted. With

1. Ruiz was recalled on May 8, 1900. The mutual animosity that had developed between him and his appointed secretary, the young poet and novelist Rufino Blanco Fombona led to various outbursts which were some of the main causes for the early end of his term. Ruiz was never given another position of responsibility in the Castro government. See Ramon J. Velásquez "Benjamin Ruiz y Rufino Blanco Fombona," BAHM, op. cit.

2. In a letter dated September 5, 1900, Celestino Castro wrote to his brother: "Since I mention General Gomez, I will tell you that J. just told me that Gomez had told him that he was going to give a public manifestation of his final retirement from public life. I understand that Juan Vicente is very displeased because you named me President, and I came to replace him." BAHM.

3. The cabinet members were: Interior, Dr. R. Cabrera Malo; Foreign Affairs, Dr. Eduardo Blanco; Finances, General R. Tello Mendoza; War and Navy, General José Ignacio Pulido; Development, General Ramón Ayala; Public Works, Juan Otañez Maucó; Public Instruction, Dr. Felix Quintero; Governor of the Federal District of Caracas, General Emilio Fernández; Secretary of the Presidency, Dr. Julio Torres Cárdenas.

such a man Castro might have felt that he was inheriting something of the glory that had marked the life of his heroes. Bolívar, Páez, Sucre, Miranda. An immediate terrain of application was the Colombian affair.

Colombia was dominated by the Conservative Party, but both Ecuador with its new President Eloy Alfaro and Venezuela, the two neighbouring countries, were ruled by liberals; and, across the Caribbean, another liberal leader, the ambitious President José Santos Zelaya of Nicaragua, hinted at the possibility of a liberal coalition against the last bastion of conservatism and clericalism in the area.¹ Castro--and it was his misfortune--took these hints seriously and already saw himself at the head of a renewed Gran Colombia Federation, the great Bolivarian dream of unity.

As a matter of more immediate concern, on October 3, 1900, the special war tax on imports and exports which had been enacted earlier that year was revoked amidst general satisfaction.² On October 29, 1900, at 4:42 A.M., an earthquake was felt throughout Venezuela and more particularly, in Caracas where the earth shook for forty-five seconds.³ Castro,

1. In July 1900, Castro was awarded the title of Division General in the Nicaraguan Army. An instance of cooperation between Nicaragua and Venezuela was the case of the Rayo, the Nicaraguan torpedo-boat.

2. W. W. Russell, "Tariff Decrees in Venezuela," Consular Reports, vol. 64, no. 243 (December 1900), pp. 522-523.

3. "El terremoto de 1900," BAHM, Año VI, no. 34 (Caracas, Julio-Agosto 1966), pp. 149-186.

who was sleeping in the Casa Amarilla was awakened by the noise and panicked--flashing childhood memories of the earthquake that had once destroyed his native village. He ran to a window overlooking the Plaza Bolívar, opened it hurriedly, jumped out in his underwear and nightgown, fell on the curb two stories below and broke his right ankle, the same one he had sprained at Tocuyito.¹ The sight of the Chief of State, sprawled on the pavement in his underwear and nightgown must have proved a rare treat for amateurs of political satire. For a folk naturally inclined to humour and light-hearted irony, Don Cipriano never really recovered from his leap out of the window. Countless cartoons of him were sketched. Several weeks before, the students of the Caracas Central University formed a "Society to the Glories of General Alfonso Sacre," a "notorious caudillo who had come from Syria or Lebanon, or somewhere in that area, and won his rank of general in combat."² This farcical put-on, a Latin American version of Alfred Jarry's Ubu-Roi, sought to satirize the common image of all these chieftains who now queued at the every Ministry, begging for a position. But after the October 29 earthquake, the occasion was too good to miss, Castro became the chief target

1. From then on, Castro was to retain a slight limp when he walked, and would use a cane. He later decided to move quarters to the nearby-villa of "Miraflores," Crespo's former mansion in Caracas--the name "Santa Inés" had been changed--which was one of the only earthquake-proof constructions in Venezuela at that time. "Miraflores" has served as the seat for the Presidential palace ever since.

2. See "La Sacrada," BAHM, Año II, no. 16 (Caracas, Enero-Febrero 1962), pp. 71-107.

of the students' pranks. It is always bad for an authoritarian-minded leader to be ignored by those who are supposed to fear his rule or admire his prowess, but it is worse for him to be laughed at.

On a more serious scale though, the end of the year 1900 saw a renewed activity among the numerous groups of small caudillos who were growing increasingly dissatisfied about Castro and his actual policies. One of the main elements of dissatisfaction was embodied in the person of the appointed jefe civil. The jefe civil was the authority in Venezuela at the municipal and district levels, traditionally chosen from within the district or the locality which he was supposed to head. Castro initiated the practice of appointing the jefes civiles himself, choosing in many cases individuals who were totally foreign to the area they were supposed to administrate, and who freely abused their powers. The jefe civil, now regarded as an agent of the central government, became a hated despot whose arbitrary rule was bitterly resented.¹ Thus, from the neighbouring islands of Trinidad and Curaçao, secret talks were being held and names whispered from mouth to ear. It was rumoured that Nicolás Rolando was preparing a coalition among liberals, "Mochistas" who did not admit the defeat of

1. Eduardo Michelena in his Vida Caraqueña, op. cit. gives several illustrative examples on the exactions that were the common practice of the jefes civiles.

their imprisoned leader, and the anti-Castro elements of the Andes. Funds were raised for the purchase of arms and ammunition; contacts were sought; underground preparations went on. . .¹

Suddenly, on December 14, 1900, General Celestino Peraza, former Secretary of the Presidency in Castro's first cabinet, the man who had shot Natividad Mendoza in the Hernández campaign the year before, rose in arms against what he had now come to consider "a clumsy dictatorship unequalled in the political life of a people that, like the Venezuelan, had made the sacrifice of so much blood and so many lives for the conquest of its public liberties". . .² To arms! To arms! Compatriots!

Peraza, in a way, typified the curious blend of men that were those chieftains of Venezuela's civil wars. He was born, like Crespo, in the Guárico lowlands. In his youth, he had been a sailor, and travelled widely. He later became a writer, a novelist whose style resembled very much that of a James Fenimore Cooper or a Robert Louis Stevenson.³ And he fought. His revolt, started in the Guárico like so many of its kind, was characterized by its hurried unpreparedness,

1. See Picón-Salas, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117; "Papeles del General Nicolás Rolando," *BAHM*, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-64; and Jiménez Arraíz, *De relieve para la historia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

2. "Una proclama de Celestino Peraza," *BAHM*, Año VII, no. 40 (Caracas, Enero-Febrero 1966), pp. 65-68.

3. Ramón A. Rodríguez, *Diccionario biográfico*, *op. cit.*, pp. 577-578. Peraza's most famous novel, *Los piratas de la sabana* is a highly coloured tale of pirates, mistaken identity and romantic intrigue.

almost by a naïve recklessness. It was the unconscious manifestation, the premature outburst of an undercurrent that had not yet risen to surface. The government dispatched General Aristides Fandeo to Peraza's encounter. By New Year's day 1901, the revolt was ended.¹ Peraza was captured and imprisoned in the Puerto Cabello fortress.²

The new year hardly brought any respite. On January 14, at eight P.M., a batallion, stationed in its Caracas barracks, ^{took} to arms but was immediately subdued.³ Several days before, on January 10, General Pedro Julian Acosta, brother to the imprisoned Samuel Acosta, had declared himself in rebellion.⁴ The fight remained circumscribed to the eastern region comprised between the Orinoco river and the coast. Despite an inferiority in equipment--the insurgents disposed of 130,000 rounds of ammunition while they only had 45,000 at their disposal⁵--the government forces, with the help of a small gunboat, the Miranda, maintained a control of the coast-line and were successful in preventing the insurgents from receiving any new shipments of arms and ammunition from the neighbouring island of Trinidad.⁶ The whole affair proved to

1. Aristides Fandeo, Por mi jefe y por mi causa (Carupano: Lyon 1903).

2. "Presos políticos entre 1900 y 1903," BAHM, Año VII, no. 40 (Caracas, Enero-Febrero, 1966), pp. 3-64.

3. Pablo Emilio Fernández, Gómez el Rehabilitador, op. cit., p. 118.

4. Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 160.

5. Gumersindo Méndez, Relación de las operaciones militares practicadas por el General Gumersindo Méndez en su carácter de Jefe expedicionario durante la última campaña (Caracas: Tipografía de "El Pregonero," 1901), p. 12.

6. Briceño Ayestarán, ibid., p. 163.

another premature and abortive attempt. The telegraphic cables on military operations that were sent during the campaign help in giving a vivid picture of what some of these combats amounted to.

National Telegraph--From Carúpano To Cumaná-January 31, 1901. From Juan Bautista Higuera to General Santiago Briceño Ayestarán

Yesterday, between 8 and 9 A.M., we fought against the traitor Pedro Julian Acosta at a place called Cangua, beating him completely and capturing four horses fully equipped, many rifles, a war drum, and all that was left behind. I myself continued to fight him in active chase until 8 P.M. when I arrived at Caño de Cruz Chiquito, where Acosta and the few officers that were with him embarked. Their horses, saddles and all, remained in my capture; I did not capture the men, because my own horse was tired and because they had been favored by the tide.¹

Several hours after this account was written, Acosta was captured and joined his brother at the San Carlos fortress.² In a short memorandum, the Commander of the governmental forces, the andino General Gumersindo Méndez, evaluated the total cost of the expedition against Acosta at 106,312 bolívars--\$21,000.³

Throughout the country, countless guerrilla movements now erupted, led, at times by figures of high colour, like this José Rafael Montilla, "El indio" Montilla, an almost legendary Trujillo warlord who spent his entire life between the prison and the field. He had once argued: "Trujillo is closer to

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1. Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., p. 169.
 2. "Presos políticos entre 1900 y 1903," BAHM, op. cit.
 3. Méndez, op. cit., p. 22.

the Capitol in Caracas than the Táchira; so if Cipriano was able to get there, why couldn't I?"¹

1. "Una sublevación del General José Rafael Montilla," BAHM, Año VII, no. 40 (Caracas, Enero-Febrero 1966), pp. 191-192.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COLOMBIAN AFFAIR: FEBRUARY-DECEMBER 1901

In February 1901, following Dr. Briceño's advice, a Constitutional Assembly was convened. A new constitution was drafted and adopted. It officially sanctioned Venezuela's division into twenty autonomous states and eliminated the election of the president by direct suffrage, placing the electoral prerogative on the Municipal Councils and State Legislatures. The president would be elected for a non-renewable six year-term. The Government Council was done away with while a dual vice-Presidency was introduced.¹ As a Venezuelan student commented in the pages of his doctoral dissertation, written several years later: "The decision to revert to indirect voting was wise, for the origin of almost all of Venezuela's civil wars was due to the fact that whenever a candidate did not triumph at the polls, whether because of an outside manipulation of the voters or by his own incapacity to win a majority, he would not be content with his defeat and resort to war. . ." Yet, he added, "the territorial division is not dictated according to the country's economic conditions but according to the ambitions of local caudillos, for in no well-ordered mind could the idea ever fit that in a nation exhausted by constant civil strife, twenty state presidents could support themselves. . . We all know," he

1. Constitution of 1901, Articles 2, 82-85, 73 and 75 in Mariñas Otero, op. cit., pp. 223-452.

concluded, "that this 'autonomy' is but a myth included in all our constitutions, but never really applied."¹

Meanwhile, the students of the Central University in Caracas had decided to stage a new act in the life of their "General" Alfonso Sacre. It was Castro's noted habit to go out for a horseback ride every late afternoon, greeting those he met--particularly the pretty women--by waving a small handkerchief in a manner that could be very easily made to look absolutely ridiculous. Thus, on February 22, 1901, amidst the Carnival celebrations, a baroque procession unfolded in the streets of Caracas, with the mythical General Alfonso Sacre--played by one of the students--dressed in a flashing uniform, prancing on his horse and saluting the crowds in an all too familiar way. Bad luck had it that Sacre and his pageant ran into the President and his suite.² This was not the first time that a Venezuelan Chief of State was made fun of. Guzmán Blanco had been the subject of many a prank, but this was more than Don Cipriano could take. In a hasty police roundup, those students who were found guilty in participating in the mockery were expelled by decree from the University, were subsequently arrested for grave misconduct and jailed.³ The University

1. Luis Sagarzazu, La Constitución de 1901 y la Reforma (Caracas: Tipografía Moderna 1906), pp. 24-25 and pp. 11-13.

2. "La Sacrada," BAHM, op. cit. An account of these events was given to me by Mr. Enrique Pérez Matos, who was one of the students involved.

3. Ibid., p. 84.

authorities protested against such an extreme measure, to no avail. In retaliation, on March 11, the University was closed down.¹ Castro had acted more out of a fit of temper than from any deep-hearted desire to quell the country's intellectual life. On March 29, the National Assembly elected him Provisional President of the Republic; his actual term would begin in February of the following year.² Confident that he now finally held a basis for power, Don Cipriano may have seen things in a different light. After all, he had proclaimed that his government would be one of "principles and not of men."³ Through the intervention of Dr. Santos A. Dominici, the University Rector, the Sacre affair, the "Sacrada" as it was called, was resolved. On May 20, the University was reopened by decree. The students who had been arrested were released and the charges against them dropped.⁴ It all was a peal of laughter that might have ended in tears of bitterness.

A more serious matter, though, was developing across the border. The Colombian government was increasingly alarmed by the help Venezuela had been giving the liberal insurgents.⁵

1. Ibid., p. 86.

2. Nunez, op. cit., p. 34.

3. Cipriano Castro, Speech on the Provisional Presidency, Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., p. 63.

4. "La Sacrada," BAHM, op. cit., p. 101.

5. In strictly legal terms, the Colombian government never granted the liberal insurgents a belligerent status, but always considered them as common criminals. See Rougier, op. cit.; pp. 231-262.

Countless notes of protest were exchanged between the two Chancelleries, to no real avail. By mid-June of 1901, the Venezuelan government decreed a token embargo on the small gunboat Rayo, a regular supplier of arms and ammunition to the rebels for over a year.¹ At the same time, however, Caracas seemed to consecrate an even more direct form of aid.

General Uribe Uribe, the liberal leader, who had been in New York collecting funds for what was now thought to be an upcoming campaign, travelled incognito to the Venezuelan capital for a series of secret talks with President Castro. Plans for a concerted attack were drafted.² Several days later, still incognito, Uribe Uribe sailed off from La Guaira on the other gunboat that had been used in the Colombian arms-traffic, the Augusto, recently incorporated to the Venezuelan fleet and renamed the Zumbador.³ At a stop in the port of La Vela de Coro, in the Falcón State, a supply of 2,500 rifles and 500,000 rounds of ammunition was taken on board.⁴ By early July, Uribe Uribe arrived in Maracaibo and continued on to San Cristóbal.⁵ His presence in the Táchira was kept secret until July 16, when he issued a manifesto, a declaration of immediate intentions: the fight was no longer carried out simply to defend the interests of a party, but "to achieve the

1. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 120.

2. Rafael Uribe Uribe, Documentos militares y políticos (Bogotá: Imprenta de vapor, 1904), p. 204.

3. Picon-Salas, Ibid.

4. Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., p. 245.

5. Uribe Uribe, Ibid., p. 204.

ideal of rebuilding the glorious nation of Grán Colombia."¹ In Bogotá, José-Manuel Marroquín, who had seized the Presidency through a palace coup d'état a year before no longer doubted that Castro was actually carrying out his plan to unite with Ecuador, Nicaragua and the Colombian liberals, and start a massive attack.²

Time had come to retaliate, and retaliate fast. Contacts had been maintained for some time with a group of Venezuelan exiles who were living in Colombia, and, more particularly, with their leader, a certain Dr. Carlos Rangel Garbiras. Concrete proposals for a concerted invasion on Venezuela were made. Rangel Garbiras was offered the support of twenty-two battalions of the Colombian regular army, a total of about five thousand men, fully equipped.³ For him, the moment had finally arrived to come to terms with his former companion Cipriano Castro. And, in the morning of Thursday, July 25, 1901, the andino doctor and his Colombian forces swarmed across the border into Venezuela.⁴

Since mid-July, Uribe Uribe had been informing President Castro and his brother Celestino, the Táchira governor, about the impending menace.⁵ His warnings were attributed to unjustified

1. Uribe Uribe, "Motivos," Proclamation dated: San Cristóbal, July 16, 1901 in Ibid., pp. 200-204.

2. Joaquín Tamayo, La Revolución de 1899 (Bogotá: Editorial Cromos, 1940), p. 193.

3. Uribe Uribe, op. cit., p. 213.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 210.

fears and were politely discarded. The July 25 attack came as a surprise. In Caracas, Cipriano Castro, conscious that he was erecting an historical landmark, issued a fiery proclamation:

Compatriots!

The Sacred Soil of the Fatherland has been invaded by an Army of Colombians, led by the traitor Carlos Rangel Garbiras. . . In the name of Venezuela, I now ask for the help of all its sons, may they never become --like Rangel Garbiras--traitors to their country.¹

In the tradition of all the previous invasions that had come in from Colombia, Rangel Garbiras' first goal lay in the seizure of San Cristóbal. However, the early effect of surprise from which he had benefited was soon lost. By crossing the frontier at two different points, through the towns of San Antonio and Ureña, without giving the troops any specific directions, precious time was later wasted in bringing the contingents together again. The Capacho villages were only reached in the evening of Friday, July 26². The march was further delayed by two violent rainfalls that drenched the roads that night and during the following day.³ Meanwhile, the defense of San Cristóbal was organised with the active participation of Uribe Uribe and his partisans. Volunteers from all over the state, answering President Castro's fervent

1. Cipriano Castro, Proclamation of July 26, 1901 in Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., p. 4.

2. Uribe Uribe, op. cit., p. 213.

3. Parada, op. cit., p. 108.

call joined the ranks of the towns garrison.¹ Alarming news was received: Rubio had fallen to the enemy, Tariba had been ransacked. On Sunday, the 28th, Rangel Garbiras' vanguard launched its first attack on the entrenchments that had been hurriedly set up in front of San Cristóbal.² The fight continued in successive assaults carried on throughout the night. The little bridge on the Torbes river that defended the town's entrance was taken. But the defenses held. In the morning of Monday the 29th, the real battle for San Cristóbal began. Hand-to-hand encounters were engaged, ferociously repealed. Mutilated bodies now drifted down the reddened waters of the Torbes.³ And, as the vanguard led its assaults, the rearguard stood back and prayed. A strange rosary: "This our rifle fire. Good! Let them have it! Help them Holy Virgin of Chiquinquirá, help them kill all those bastards."⁴ Finally, at eleven A.M. on the 29th, the invaders were routed and later chased back across the border. Twenty hours of almost continuous fighting carried a death toll of over 1,200.⁵ In the north, General

1. Ibid., pp. 112-114. Among the volunteers were Generals Rafael Rojas Fernandez, Froilán Prato and F. A. Colmenares Pacheco; also General Eustoquio Gómez, one of Juan Vicente Gómez's cousins and General José Rosario García, his Colombian uncle.

2. Ibid., p. 109.

3. Ibid., p. 119.

4. Ibid., p. 111. Nemecio Parada, who wrote this account was captured by the invading troops and followed the campaign as a war prisoner. Another eyewitness account of the battle of San Cristóbal is given by Conrad Brandt in "A Fight in a South American Revolution," The Independent, vol. 54, pt. 2 (October 16, 1902), pp. 2464-2472.

5. Celestino Castro, Telegram of July 31, 1901 in Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

Régulo Olivares was able to report that he had defeated the small enemy faction who had tried to take over the Táchira railroad.¹ Hastily prepared and carried out, the Rangel Garbiras invasion had been, in the words of Pedro Nel Ospina who became Minister of War in the Marroquín cabinet right after the July events, "a disastrous adventure . . . that had merely ended in a shameless robbery, as the Táchira territory was pointlessly plundered."² Rangel Garbiras' drive for power received little support in Venezuela, and even such diehard "Mochistas" as General Horacio Ducharne who later adhered to the andino doctor's cause³--as being also that of the imprisoned General Hernández--could not forget that, after all, he had been helped by a foreign country.

From Caracas, Cipriano Castro sent his congratulations to his brother Celestino and was, in turn, profusely congratulated for his victory.⁴ It seemed as though he had not only won a fight over a mere rival, but over the evil forces of clericalism and reactionary thought. Castro came to think of himself as a champion of progress and enlightenment. He had been strongly influenced by evening chats with Luís Razetti and other figures of the Positivist generation. Carried away by his enthusiasm

1. Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 125.

2. Pedro Nel Ospina, "Cincuenta días en un Ministerio," reproduced in Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., p. 427.

3. Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, Ibid., pp. 100-101.

4. See Landaeta Rosales, Ibid., pp. 147-413.

for ideas that he did not always understand, he even had the young Dr. Rafael Cabrera Malo, one of the exponents of the new thought, appointed Minister of the Interior, a short-lived, but significant appointment.¹

His easy victory over Rangel Garbiras convinced Don Cipriano that fate would always smile upon his future ventures. As an early retaliatory measure, shipping had been interrupted on the Zulia river between the Venezuelan port of Encontrados and the Colombian port of Catatumbo.² This eliminated one of northern Colombia's major outlets for coffee and cattle trade. On July 30, 1901, amidst the prevailing euphoria, Castro proposed to carry out the original plan to invade Colombia with Uribe Uribe and overthrow the despised Marroquín clique. The Minister of War, General José Ignacio Pulido, an old war horse who had fought against Guzmán Blanco in the 1870's, objected: "Such a project is utter nonsense, because the number of troops that we could ever dispose of, even counting those of Uribe Uribe would never be enough to overthrow a foreign government. To invade Colombia, the entire Republic must be mobilized into war."³ Dazzled by his dreams of conquest, Castro tolerated no objections. Pulido was forced to resign the same day. He

1. Dr. Rafael Cabrera Malo was Minister of the Interior from July 1900 until April 1901.

2. Decree of July 29, 1901, in Landaeta Rosales, Ibid., pp. 9-10.

3. Quoted in Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., p. 248. Martínez-Sánchez was an eyewitness to the scene.

was replaced as Minister by General Ramón Guerra, the man who in 1898 had defeated the "Mocho" Hernández, and then, in turn, risen in arms against the Andrade government.¹ And Castro's Grand Design slowly took shape. It was decided that Venezuela would invade Colombia from the Goagira peninsula in the north and across the Arauca plateau in the south. The two forces, totalling about ten thousand men, joined by Uribe Uribe's troops would then converge upon Bogotá. Once in Bogotá, Uribe Uribe would be proclaimed Provisional President. A conference would then follow where Castro, Uribe Uribe and Ecuador's new leader, the liberal General Leonidas Plaza would unite their countries in a new Grán Colombia federation headed by Castro himself. An Equatorian expeditionary force would then be landed at Punta Arenas on the shores of Costa Rica and second José Santos Zelaya in joining Nicaragua, Honduras, and Costa Rica into a Grand Union of Central American Republics.² This ludicrous project, strangely reminiscent of King Picrocholé's imaginary conquests, could well have been the aberrant construct of a distorted mind. Yet, apparently confident in Uribe Uribe's assurances of support and in the vague promises that were made to him by Zelaya and Plaza, Cipriano Castro had come to envision reality as actually lying a step ahead of fiction.

1. Manuel Landaeta Rosales, "Gabinetes del Gobierno del General Cipriano Castro," Landaeta Rosales Archives, Caracas, IX, 68 folio 124, p. 115.

2. Martínez-Sánchez, ibid., pp. 250-251.

The Goagira expedition, pompously called "Auxiliary Army of the Revolution," numbering only 1,400 men, was placed under the command of the andino General José-Antonio Dávila,¹ who had recently distinguished himself by capturing the "Mocho" Hernández in the latter's early revolt against the Restoration. The expedition sailed from La Guaira to Maracaibo and, from there, marched on north, across the border where substantial reinforcements were supposed to be waiting. In fact, these reinforcements amounted to only fifty men. Their commander, General--inevitably--Clodomiro Castillo, informed Dávila that no other help was to be expected; that Uribe Uribe had been detained; that the jointly planned invasion from the south had not taken place. Should the expedition, then, turn back? Carmelo Castro, Cipriano's half-brother, who had joined the Goagira campaign suggested that a frontal attack might still be carried out on the port town of Riohacha, the intended goal, where a prompt evacuation could be assured by the three Venezuelan gunboats, the Crespo, the Miranda and the Zumbador that were "covering" the expedition from the sea.² The march was resumed, under a blazing sun, through the desolate regions of the Goagira. Starved and exhausted, the invaders finally stumbled into a small Indian hamlet named Carazúa and decided

1. I have relied primarily on J. N. Contreras Serrano, "Invasión a la Goagira Colombiana, Combate de Carazúa," Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, vol. 39 (Caracas, 1956) p. 39.

2. Rougier, op. cit., p. 278.

to bivouac there for the night. The following morning, September 13, 1901, Carazúa was attacked by a Colombian governmental force of about three thousand, part of which had recently been landed in Riohacha.¹ Disadvantaged by the number and the terrain, the Venezuelans were quickly routed. Dávila and Castillo hurriedly ordered the retreat, followed by most of the expeditionary troops, but a small contingent under Carmelo Castro's command stayed behind. Castillo, who was familiar with the region, guided Dávila on the road back to Venezuela. Castro and his small force, on the other hand, roamed aimlessly for days, getting lost in the thick jungles of the Perijá mountain ridge, tracked down by the Colombian regulars, and also by bands of Motilón-tribe Indians.² Scattered remains of the expedition finally reached Maracaibo in early October. Of the 1,400 that had left, only five hundred returned; six hundred had been killed and three hundred captured. The whole affair had ended in complete disaster.

1. Contreras Serrano, op. cit., p. 141. In Riohacha, the three Venezuelan gunboats had opened fire on the town without previous warning. The commander of the French man-of-war Suchet, that was cruising nearby, intervened and began evacuating the foreign residents of Riohacha. The bombardment was called off upon the arrival of the Colombian man-of-war Pinzón, escorting the French merchant ship Alexandre Bixio that was carrying the Colombian contingent later used in Carazúa. Rougier, op. cit., p. 278, note 3. See also, Quai d'Orsay Archives, Vénézuéla: Politique Intérieure, tomo IV, no. 34, p. 108.

2. Contreras Serrano, op. cit., pp. 43-45.

The appalling news of Carazúa was hushed.¹ Grán Colombia, the Grand Alliance, the Grand Design: Cipriano Castro's dreams of conquest had all lamentably withered away. What remained, though, was a conflict between Colombia and Venezuela. A conflict that caused an increasing concern in the United States where the Panamá Canal was becoming an issue of major importance. Under the auspices of the new president, Theodore Roosevelt, a mediation was proposed to Castro by the American Minister in Caracas. Castro flatly rejected the proposal and offered, in turn, his assistance--if the United States consented to supply arms to the leader of the Colombian liberals--in^{securing} the Panamá Canal for the United States after a liberal victory in Colombia. The American Minister was shocked and amused by such pretensions.² The lessons of Carazúa, apparently had not been understood.

On October 12, 1901, under the benevolent auspices of Don Porfirio Díaz, the Second-Inter-American Conference was convened in Mexico City. Those were the early days of Pan-Americanism. One of the first items on the agenda was

1. To this very day, the main body of evidence on the Goagira expedition consists of Carmelo Castro's account as transcribed by historians J. N. Contreras Serrano and Mariano Picón-Salas. All the other documents pertaining to the campaign have either been destroyed or are still withheld from public use.

2. Herbert Wolcott Bowen, Recollections, Diplomatic and Undiplomatic (New York: Grafton Press, 1926), pp. 249-250.

the Colombo-Venezuelan dispute. On October 24, a joint note was sent from Mexico to Castro and Marroquín, urging both parties to agree on a peaceful settlement.¹ Several days later, Francisco José Herboso, the Chilean Minister Plenipotentiary to Bogotá offered his government's services to end any further hostilities.² Marroquín, who, after the Carazúa affair could afford to play the "generous role", accepted the mediation.³ Castro, on his part, referred Herboso to the answer he had already given the Inter-American Conference President: Venezuela refused any arrangement unless Colombia consented to offer reparations for war damage. "The Colombian conservative government," he added, . . . "has always tended to exert its nefarious influence over the nation which once gave it its liberty and its independence [i.e. Venezuela]; this is unacceptable . . . You must all know that the Colombian conservative government lives off the same terror, misery and obscurantism with which it pretends to invade us."⁴ Despite all that had happened, Don Cipriano still believed he carried the torch of enlightenment and freedom in his hands. "What a pity that such a great man should have such a big heart" had

1. Telegram to their Excellencies the Presidents of Venezuela and Colombia, October 25, 1901 in Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

2. Francisco J. Herboso, Diplomatic Notes, nos. 75 and 93 in ibid., pp. 24 and 86.

3. J. M. Marroquín, Telegram to the President of the Inter-American Conference, November 1, 1901 in ibid., p. 82.

4. Cipriano Castro, Note addressed to the President of the Inter-American Conference, October 26, 1901 in Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., p. 83.

whispered General José Antonio Velutini, the Minister of the Interior, paraphrasing Talleyrand's famous remark about Napoleon, when he had heard Castro read his answer at a cabinet meeting.¹ Such undiplomatic language could merely upset the smooth decorum of the Mexico conference, but it also rendered any peaceful mission impossible to accomplish.

At home, Castro had to cope with two minor revolts, attempts that proved to be more pathetic than threatening.² And, on November 6, the government could officially announce that a state of internal peace had settled throughout the republic. On November 8, however, Eduardo Blanco, visibly overwhelmed by all that had happened since he had become Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in open disagreement with Don Cipriano's reckless policies, resigned.³ He would not write the epic of the Liberal Restoration. On November 16, Colombia officially broke its diplomatic relations with Venezuela.⁴ Hostilities between the two countries might have erupted, but, on December 19, 1901, Venezuela was, again, caught in the throes of civil war: the prelude for the fateful events of the two years that were to follow. Those events were to prove crucial

1. Quoted in Nuñez, op. cit., p. 39.

2. These were the abortive revolts of Dr. Juan Pietri and General Aurelio Valbuena in the Carabobo state. For details, see Picon-Salas, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

3. Ibid., p. 40.

4. Decree no. 1287, November 16, 1901, in Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., p. 88.

for the country's historical development and, at the same time, epitomized the role Venezuela had come to play within its international context.

CHAPTER XIV

VENEZUELA IN THE AGE OF IMPERIALISMS: 1896-1901

At the foot of the Eiffel Tower, a mechanical curb conveyed the public across the waters of the Seine to the hills of the Trocadéro from where the marvelled crowds could gaze upon the mighty achievements of Western Civilization. The Paris World Exhibit of 1900 embodied the culmination of an age, as well as it foreshadowed a new epoch in the development of mankind.

1900, the dawn of a new century; the Belle Epoque: faded images of lavishly dressed women, of shiny top hats and bushy moustaches. These were the beginnings of the age of electricity. Now, more than ever, man could call himself the master of the elements. It was the age of optimism, of unswerving faith in material progress as factor of final happiness to the human race. The industrial revolution, finally accomplished, was yielding the fruits of material comfort. Technology had shortened distances; "universal" was no longer an encyclopaedic concept. Western Civilization now extended through, confident in that it was unifying the world under the best of all cultural rules. It was the golden age of colonial imperialism,¹ the age of the white man's burden. A time when small countries such as Belgium could control a distant territory twenty times their own size, when individuals

1. On imperialism, see Heinz Gollwitzer, Europe in the Age of Imperialism (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1969).

like Cecil Rhodes could, in the tradition of the discoverers of an earlier age, bestow their name upon a conquered land. By 1900, Asia and Africa had been divided among the Western Powers and, as dreams of expansion prevailed, from London, Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Rome, heads began to turn towards the New World and, more particularly, towards Latin America.

During the nineteenth century, through investments and trade, Great Britain had been the first Western Power to establish its commercial hegemony over the Latin American continent, after the latter's independence. The collapse of its Mexican ventures in the 1860's and the resounding bankruptcy that Ferdinand de Lesseps' Compagnie du Canal Maritime de Panama was to undergo in 1900 reduced France's role to that of a cultural mentor, highly critical about the attitudes and actions of its other more successful rivals.¹ And, in the last decades of the century, two rising powers had entered the scene: Germany and the United States--dreams of a German empire in Brazil.² Latin America's economy, as a whole, had come to depend on the major powers of the western world.

This dependence, though, had fallen short of the African and Asian imperialistic ventures. Shielded by President James Monroe's policy statement of 1823, otherwise known as the "Monroe Doctrine," the Latin American countries had been

1. See J. Fred Rippy, Latin America in World Politics, op. cit., Chapter VIII.

2. Stephen Bonsal, "Greater Germany in South America," The North American Review, vol. 176 (January 1903), pp. 58-67.

guarded from direct European intervention. It was argued, however, that this "had occurred at a time when the world offered many opportunities for colonization in other quarters."¹ At the end of the nineteenth century, such a period had drawn to a close. In the words of Cecil Rhodes, it was now the "sacred duty of Anglo-Saxons to civilize such parts of the world not yet civilized, especially South America."² And within South America, "the territories of Venezuela . . . appeared to have . . . a peculiar attraction for Continental empire-builders."³

This "peculiar attraction" particularly affected those nations that had appeared at relatively late a date on the world stage of expansionism: Germany and the United States. A similar enthusiasm was felt in both countries about the glowing possibilities that this new land seemed to offer. Its successful intervention in the British Guiana boundary dispute convinced the United States that it was now in an ideal position to develop its business and trade with Venezuela, a country which it had previously neglected to a large extent. In 1896, the recently founded National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) obtained the privilege of establishing a permanent center for the exhibition of trade manufactures in

1. Somers Somerset, "Europe and South America," The Nineteenth Century and After (London, April 1903), p. 585.

2. Cecil Rhodes, as quoted in Great Britain, Foreign Office, "Venezuela, Diplomatic and Consular Archives" (F.O. 80, 1901) Document no. 162, p. 3.

3. Somerset, ibid, p. 584.

Caracas.¹ That same year, a man by the name of Alfred F. Jaurett appeared on the Venezuelan scene. Jaurett, it was later ascertained, had once been a French citizen, an officer in the French army who later deserted and settled in Panama at the time of the French concession over the building of the canal. He had then moved to Mexico where he was involved in a number of shady business transactions.² He had become an American citizen and came to Venezuela as the representative of an important Chicago press group. Upon his arrival in Caracas, Jaurett founded an English language weekly, The Venezuelan Herald, that was geared to support the expansion and defend the interests of the United States. Noted for his fact finding ability, Jaurett, through his newspaper, soon became the most reliable source of information on Venezuela for foreign investors.³ The Venezuelan Herald years, in a way, symbolized this early spirit of candid and optimistic speculation. Official sanction from the United States government seemed to be granted on all these endeavours, as President McKinley appointed one of his former campaign managers, the enterprising and capable Francis Butler Loomis to the post of Minister Plenipotentiary in Caracas.

1. See Charles E. Carreras, "United States Economic Penetration of Venezuela and its Effects on Diplomacy: 1895-1906," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill, 1971, Chapter V.

2. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 134.

3. Carreras, ibid. Chapter VI, part III.

Germany, on its part, conducted a thorough, methodical survey, a la mode allemande, on Venezuela's resources,¹ and, upon analyzing the data, had concluded favorably. Thus, in 1896, the Disconto Gesellschaft of Berlin had consented to the fifty million bolívar--ten million dollar--loan on a 5% interest rate, the loan itself having been made payable up to 80%.² (i.e., 80% of the capital loaned was actually paid), whereas all the loans Venezuela had previously negotiated with Great Britain had been made on a 6 to 7% interest rate and a 60 to 63% basis for payment.³ The 1896 loan was to be the first step leading to a broader plan of investments. The German banks and trading houses now renewed their efforts to win a prominent place in the Venezuelan market--they already occupied a fair rank--through loose and generous credit benefits.⁴

Time soon showed, however, that all these policies had been based on a number of grave misconceptions that had been cloaked under the golden veil of wishful thinking and greed. The enthusiasm of promoters like Rudolph Dolge, one of the organisers of the Caracas NAM center, belied the fact that a pro-United States sentiment, which did exist in Venezuela, necessarily meant an automatic approval of all United States endeavours. The economic naïveté of both the American

1. Victor Bérard, "Allemagne et Vénézuéla," La Revue de Paris (Paris, 15 Janvier 1903), p. 423.

2. Bérard, op. cit., p. 423.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 430.

and German businessmen with regard to trade and investments in Venezuela was only matched by their ignorance of the country's social and political realities.

By 1900, Germany's indiscriminate credit policy had turned against her. The overextension of unproductive loans had eaten up any fringe benefits that might otherwise have been obtained. With the effects of the world coffee crisis, the German trading houses now merely stocked the signatures of ruined landowners in their account books and stored tons of depreciated coffee in their warehouses: a meagre wager of success.¹ By 1900, nearly all the United States concerns that existed in Venezuela faced critical situations. The New York and Bermúdez Company, that had been bought by the Asphalt Company of America, the famed "Asphalt Trust," had been in almost constant difficulty since the beginning of its operations, fifteen years back. It was primarily accused by successive Venezuelan governments of not fulfilling its contract.² Furthermore, an error in the determination of the original land concession grant had brought forth endless controversies with other contending groups, Venezuelan or American, who laid their claims on the same asphalt deposits.³ Several colonization projects that had been started around 1897 by American promoters, on the small island of Pedernales

1. Ibid.

2. For details, see Carreras, op. cit., Chapter II and Rayburn, "United States Investments in Venezuelan Asphalt," op. cit.

3. Ibid.

in the Orinoco delta region, or in the Tocuyo valley, near Caracas, failed to produce any results.¹ The small Caracas NAM center soon declined in activity and was finally closed down in 1901.²

The same reasons were given for all these failures, whether they affected American or German interests: inadequate planning, lack of capital, adverse natural conditions (rainfalls, malaria, termites, etc. . . .), a general recession in world trade, and, above all, Venezuela's continuous cycle of revolutions and uprisings that paralyzed all of the country's commercial activities.³

1. Carreras, ibid. Chapters IV and VI, part 4. The Pedernales colonization scheme was part of the overall activities carried out by George Turnbull who had bought an existing concession over a large tract of land in the Orinoco region. An intricate conflict of interests opposed the original Manoa Company to Turnbull's Orinoco Company, Ltd. For further details, see Charles J. Jackson, "The Manoa Company," Inter-American Economic Affairs, vol. XIII, no. 4 (Spring 1960), pp. 12-45. The Tocuyo plan was promoted by a certain George W. Upton whose short-lived Tocuyo Navigation Company financed the colonization scheme.

2. Carreras, ibid., Chapter V.

3. In that period, however, the Castro government attempted to win new markets and attract new investments. On 1900, George Crichfield, an American citizen, received a concession for the exploitation of asphalt deposits in the Lake Maracaibo region. By mid-1900, Mr. Charles Röhl, a prominent member in the Banco de Venezuela administration, was sent to Europe as an unofficial representative of the Venezuelan government. Mr. Röhl's mission consisted primarily in sousing the major European banks as to the possibility of extending a new loan to Venezuela. The country's credit abroad had reached such a deplorable stage, that Mr. Röhl's mission was a failure in that respect. On Mr. Röhl's insistence, the Belgian government accepted to consider Venezuela's case (in the absence of relations at the diplomatic level-- they had been severed in 1895--with Belgium, Mr. Röhl was one of Belgium's consular agents in Caracas). In 1901, a commission, headed by Mr. J. Van der Heyde conducted a thorough study of the country's resources. The Van der Heyde report, a remarkable piece of documentation, was published in the Recueil Consulaire of January 1902.

On April 11, 1900, Dr. Schmidt-Leda, German Minister to Caracas, presented the new Venezuelan government a bill of 710,274 bolívars--150,000 dollars--for the damage inflicted, during Cipriano Castro's revolution, upon the Grán Ferrocarril de Venezuela, the German railroad line. Dr. Schmidt-Leda also asked what were the government's plans for the payment of the other numerous claims that had arisen.¹ The Venezuelan government, in turn, answered on April 23, by issuing a decree that postponed consideration of any foreign claim until six months after public peace were to be declared.² On January 24, 1901, Caracas issued a new decree, creating a special commission that would examine only those foreign claims that applied to damages inflicted after May 23, 1899, the starting date of the Restoration revolution.³ The German Minister, in the name of his government, objected to the measure. A major part of the German claims were, indeed, concerned with the recovery of interest--now four years in arrears--on the 1896 loan and included personal property damages that went back to the Crespo revolution of 1892.⁴

(3 cont.) No further action ensued, primarily on account of the events of the Years 1902 and 1903. Part of the evidence here was given to me by Mr. Juan Röhl, Mr. Charles Röhl's son.

1. Venezuela, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Memoria (1902), Note of April 11, 1900.

2. The Venezuelan Arbitrations before the Hague Tribunal, 1903 in U. S. Congress-Senate. Sen.Doc. 316, 58th Cong. 2nd Sess., 1905, hereafter referred to as The Venezuelan Arbitration of 1903, pp. 958-959.

3. Ibid.

4. Venezuela, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Asuntos Internacionales (Caracas: Tipografía J. M. Herrera Irigoyen, 1903), pp. 33-34.

Dr. Schmidt-Leda then proposed that all claims between Venezuela and Germany be settled directly through diplomatic channels. The Venezuelan government, however, objected, stating that all matters pertaining to foreign claims should be settled by the Venezuelan courts.¹ The debate now centered on principles of international law, and dragged on. Proposals and counter-proposals of conciliation were exchanged, to no real avail. By December 31, 1901, the German Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, von Pilgrim Baltazzi, renewed his country's demands on similar terms. An immediate payment of 1,718,815 bolívars--340,000 dollars was now called for.² Two weeks before, the German Ambassador in Washington had submitted a promemoria to Secretary of State John Hay which stated that: "the Imperial Government believed that further negotiations with Venezuela were hopeless If the Venezuelan government continued to decline, as before, its responsibilities, it would have to be considered what measured of coercion should be used against it." The German government, though, considered it of importance to let first of all the government of the United States know about its purpose that under no circumstances did it consider in its proceedings the acquisition, or the permanent occupation

1. Venezuelan Arbitrations of 1903, ibid., pp. 959-962.

2. Ibid., p. 915.

of territory."¹

Whereas the German government had immediately espoused the cause of its wronged Venezuelan interests, the McKinley administration seemed to pay little attention to the mounting claims of its own nationals who supposed, perhaps too readily, that the State Department and the White House would automatically speak for them. The Spanish-American war of 1898 had opened new horizons for the United States, but by 1900, no specific policy of intervention in Latin American affairs had been developed.

In Caracas, a major conflict had emerged involving the New York and Bermúdez Company. Loomis openly sided with the leading Republican figures² who directed the affairs of the "Asphalt Trust" and kept Washington informed about the "foul conspiracy" that was being carried out.³ Castro, through his wife's influential foster-uncle, Felipe Arocha, had acquired important interests in one of the company's contenders on the Bermúdez asphalt concession and abusively pushed the latter's claims. In August 1901, Dr. Claudio Bruzual Sierra, the New York and Bermúdez Company's lawyer was arrested, imprisoned and kept incommunicado for "reasons of public safety."⁴ As

1. Promemoria to John Hay, December 11, 1901 quoted in Howard C. Hill, Roosevelt and the Caribbean (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), p. 111.

2. These included men like Avery D. Andrews and "General" Francis V. Greene, a personal friend of Theodore Roosevelt. Carreras, op. cit., p. 42.

3. Ibid., p. 55.

4. Ibid., p. 61.

reported by Jaurett, another staunch supporter of the "Asphalt Trust," the practices of the Castro government were generally denounced as outrageous. Washington took notice, but did nothing.

In July 1901, Loomis was recalled and replaced, as Minister to Caracas, by Herbert Wolcott Bowen. The new appointment carried with it an important change of personalities. Whereas Loomis could be depicted as an Ohio Republican party man, a former journalist turned diplomat,¹ Bowen was a genuine and haughty New England aristocrat, whose ancestry could be traced back to the early seventeenth century. Educated at Yale, where he had been William Howard Taft's classmate, and at Columbia Law School, Bowen was coined as an accomplished musician, a connoisseur of art and a scholar of wide achievements who spoke French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Persian fluently, and wrote poetry.² A type of American who seemed to come right out of a novel by Henry James.

Bowen disapproved of his predecessor's meddling with the American interests in Venezuela. He resolutely considered the various companies' claims from Olympian heights and heeded little attention to their growing alarms. On September 6, 1901, two months after Bowen was appointed to Caracas, William McKinley was assassinated and Theodore Roosevelt became President of the United States. Interest in Latin American affairs

1. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, vol. 37 (New York: James T. White & Co.), pp. 38-39.

2. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

was increased as the new President was setting his eyes on the Colombian isthmus of Panamá. But, probably under the influence of its Minister in Caracas, the United States government was not prepared to intervene on behalf of its citizens' vested interests in Venezuela, and the suggestion of an article printed in the December 19, 1901 issue of The Independent: "there is need [in Venezuela] of paternal intervention on the part of the United States of a character to give guarantees of order of personal rights and foreign capital,"¹ remained a dead letter.

Convinced that Castro, a man whom Bowen had qualified as "ignorant, obstinate and wilful"² represented an immediate threat to their property and concerns, and frustrated by the lack of support they were receiving from their Government, the American businessmen of Venezuela and, more particularly, the directors of the New York and Bermúdez Company began searching for a viable solution to their dilemma.

1. A Resident of Caracas, "The Need of Foreign Intervention in Venezuelan Affairs," The Independent, vol. 53 (New York, December 19, 1901), p. 3002.

2. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 252.

CHAPTER XV

MR. MATOS AND HIS REVOLUTION: JULY-DECEMBER 1901

On November 6, 1901, Mr. Muir, Collector at the Victoria Dock in London, wrote to the port's Commissioner of Customs: "Information reached me yesterday that a vessel was fitting out in the Thames in a suspicious manner . . . with a crew much larger than that usually carried by a vessel her size. . . From the various reports received, suspicion naturally arose that the vessel was fitting out as a privateer."¹ A short enquiry established that the vessel in question was the Ban Righ, of about 1,500 tons burden, which had formerly belonged to the Aberdeen Steamship Company. The Ban Righ, it appeared, had recently been acquired in the name of the Colombian government by a certain Mr. Rudolph de Paula, a former Colombian, now a naturalized British citizen.² The Foreign Office was alerted, and the Ban Righ was momentarily detained while further investigations were carried out.³

Repeated inspections were made on board. The ship's after deck was being strengthened; electric light was installed; ironwork foundations--for swivel guns--were laid.⁴ The Port Inspector, Mr. Clandillon admitted that he had never seen such arrangements on any ordinary merchant or passenger vessel.⁵

1. "Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Venezuela, Presented to both Houses of Parliament-by Command of His Majesty the King, February, 1903," hereafter referred to as Cd.1399, included in the Sessional Papers, vol. 87, pp. 701 & ff. Document no 25, Enclosure no. 1, p. 42.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., Enclosure, no. 3, p. 43.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., Enclosure, no. 5, p. 44.

On November 14, confirmation came from the Colombian legation in London: the Ban Righ had, indeed, been bought by the Colombian government to help in the defense of the port town of Colón in the Panamá canal zone, and Mr. de Paula was, indeed, responsible for conveying the Ban Righ to its final destination, under British flag, via the Belgian harbour of Antwerp.¹ The Foreign Office then considered the possibility of the vessel being used by Colombia for hostile purposes against Venezuela, on account of the recent events that had occurred between the two countries. However, since the two South American republics were not officially at war, there could be no further argument, and on November 21, Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Minister, allowed the Ban Righ to be released.²

The vessel arrived in Antwerp at two P.M. on Sunday the 24th. The following morning, the ship's captain, a certain C. L. Willis Mallory took on board the "cargo" that was waiting on the wharf and, according to the bill of lading, consisted of "hardware, musical instruments and kettledrums," 263 tons in all.³ That same day, a report reached London: a large quantity of ammunition and shell was being forwarded to Antwerp, by barge, from the French port of Dunkirk.⁴ Meanwhile,

1. Cd. 1399, op. cit. Document no. 26, Enclosure no. 6, p. 45.

2. Ibid., Document no 29.

3. Captain Willis, The Cruise of the Ban Righ: or How I Became a Pirate (London: Brooks Bros., 1903), pp. 6-8.

4. Cd. 1399, ibid., Document, no. 36.

in Antwerp, the Ban Righ was boarded by new passengers: "a French captain of artillery, two sergeants, a doctor and a Spanish-speaking gentleman. . . ." ¹

After some delay due to minor mechanical troubles, the Ban Righ sailed off across the Atlantic. During the passage, Captain Willis soon discovered that the ship's holds actually contained "175 tons of Mauser rifles, 180 tons of ammunition, pack saddles, a large number of field guns and carriages, two Hotchkiss guns, and two quick-firers." ² Mr. de Paula and "the Spanish-speaking gentleman" who had boarded at Antwerp assured Willis that those guns were for the Colombian government. ³ And the trip continued. On Sunday, December 22, 1901, at three P. M., the Ban Righ reached Fort de France in the French island of Martinique. ⁴ Lying in port were a Venezuelan and a French man-of-war. As Willis was later to write, "the Venezuelan seemed to regard us with suspicion and all night long played her search light on us, watching our every movement." ⁵ The following morning, the Venezuelan gunboat, the Restaurador, hurriedly sailed off. While in Fort de France, the Ban Righ was refuelled in coal. Engineers of the French Compagnie Générale Transatlantique strengthened

1. Willis, Ibid., p. 8. This Spanish-speaking gentleman was Antonio Parra Hernaiz.

2. Ibid., p. 9.

3. Ibid., p. 23.

4. Ibid., p. 25.

5. Willis, op. cit., p. 28.

her sides with light armour, protected her gun positions and finished the work of converting her into a vessel of war.¹ Mr. de Paula then informed Willis that the ship was to be sold in a few days, and its English crew discharged accordingly.² Christmas celebrations highlighted the transaction. A "foreign crew" was signed on.³ During the last week of December, the "new owner" arrived at Fort de France on the French transatlantic liner Amérique, none other than General Manuel Antonio Matos.⁴ Matos, the banker, the man who had arranged the way to power for Cipriano Castro, and had been imprisoned for opposing the new ruler's designs; Matos, who was now ready to launch a major revolution over Venezuela.

Since his release from prison, in the early days of 1900, Matos had adopted the cloak of conspiracy and established contacts with various groups and individuals who, in one way or another, found themselves at odds with the Liberal Restoration. Billiard games, organised at his house in Caracas were prolonged late into the night, and covered more secret conversations.⁵ Matos had become the pole of attraction for all those who thought that time had come to overthrow Cipriano

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 30.

4. Ibid.

5. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 119. This evidence was confirmed to me by Mr. Enrique Pérez Matos who attended several of those meetings.

Castro and end his incoherent rule. Matos was both rich and influential. He was, after all, the late Guzmán Blanco's brother-in-law, as well as a leading figure in the old Liberal Party. As the inexorable sequence of events of the Castro regime developed, Mr. Matos' circle of conspirators widened. All the major provincial caudillos--Rolando, Vidal, Riera, Solagnie, Ducharne, etc. . . -- were included. Matos, the international financier, was both respected and trusted by the foreign concerns: he spoke their own language of "reason."¹

By 1901, Great Britain had joined Germany and the American private interests in the chorus of grievances and claims against Venezuela and her government. Aside from the arrears on the British share of Venezuela's foreign debt, and the usual list of property damages inflicted to its nationals, the British government was becoming increasingly concerned about a series of attacks that were carried out against British vessels and British subjects by Venezuelan gunboats:² a repetition of similar incidents. Venezuela, in each case, argued that the ships in question were suspected of smuggling arms for the revolutionists on its territory. Great Britain, in turn, protested that such attacks constituted breaches to international navigation, and that Venezuela furthermore had, in several instances, held armed reprisals

1. Venezuelan Arbitrations of 1903, op. cit., pp. 291-294.

2. "Memorandum on existing causes of complaint against Venezuela," Cd. 1399, op. cit., Document no. 108, pp. 126-128.

on the small island of Patos--located at the mouths of the Orinoco, between the mainland and Trinidad--which was considered British territory. This latter point was contested by Venezuela, thereby heightening the tone of the dispute. Finally, England asserted that the Venezuelan Consul in Trinidad, Carlos Benito Figueredo, had been guilty of "serious impropriety in conduct."¹ He was accused of exacting improper fees and charges on shipments that left the island for the Venezuelan mainland, of exerting an unwarranted authority by collecting customs dues before a shipment was sent out. He even had, on several occasions and for no apparent reason, refused to dispatch vessels that were bound for Venezuela. The Castro government, so far, had ignored all protests and appeals.

Matos, on the other hand, listened and encouraged these dissents. Promises were made. With Castro pushed aside, Venezuela would respect all its engagements, public and private. Discriminatory measures to foreign trade, like the famed 30% surtax on all imports from the British West Indies would be abolished,² and foreign businesses would have their interests protected. These assurances caught the sympathetic ear of the directors of the New York and Bermúdez

1. Ibid.

2. Great Britain, Foreign Office, Diplomatic and Consular Archives, hereafter referred to as F.O. F. O. 80, 1902, Document no 237.

Company who then sought a direct contact with Matos and offered a banquet in his honour on July 5, 1901, Venezuela's Independence Day.¹ This was an occasion for a secret exchange of proposals. Later in the month, as Cipriano Castro's Colombian ventures were developing, Mr. Matos left Venezuela for New York where he arrived in the night of July 22. The following morning, he was received at the headquarters of the "Asphalt Trust" on no. 11 Broadway.² There, he outlined his plans of revolution and asked for support.³ Apparently impressed by the prospect of recovering a stronghold on the much disputed asphalt concession, the New York and Bermudez Company agreed to offer Matos a loan of \$100,000, in the form of a check on the Seaboard National Bank, to be followed by additional advances.⁴ These funds were labelled as "legal expenses" in the Company's books.⁵ On general terms, the "Asphalt Trust" promised to help Matos in every way it could.

In his plans, Matos proposed to use the funds granted by the New York and Bermudez for the purchase of a gunboat that would be the rallying force of the revolution he was preparing. Since Europe seemed the best place to carry out such a purchase, he soon left New York for Paris where he

1. Orray E. Thurber, The Venezuelan Question: Castro and the Asphalt Trust (New York, 1907), p. 28. The evidence presented by Mr. Thurber is taken primarily from the records of the public interrogations carried out at the time of the trial against the New York and Bermudez Company.

2. Ibid., p. 27.

3. Ibid., p. 32.

4. Ibid., p. 36.

5. Ibid., p. 41.

arrived by mid-August. In his suite at the Continental Hotel, he met with his friend Rudolph de Paula,¹ who informed him that the Aberdeen Steamship Company was selling one of its ships. Matos stayed in Paris throughout the remaining summer and autumn of 1901. From his suite at the Continental, he laid the final touches to the revolt that was to begin as soon as the Ban Righ was to arrive in Venezuelan waters.² The reckless venture of September that had ended with the disaster of Carazua further convinced Mr. Matos that Castro was a man to eliminate. On a letter of October 25, he affirmed: "I have Colombia's promise not to invade Venezuela if Castro disappears from the scene. In order to re-establish peace, we must push Castro aside."³ Castro had become an idle trouble-maker, a nuisance, a menace to peace, trade and progress.

Now, at Fort de France, leaning on the railing of the Ban Righ, Mr. Matos was finally about to reach his goal. With the help of the Colombian legation in London, he had managed to have the ship released, and with the benevolent compliance of the French authorities in Martinique he could have it equipped at ease. He received news from the mainland. Since mid-November, Castro had been aware that a major revolutionary conspiracy was developing behind the closed doors of

1. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 139.

2. Evidence from Gallegos, op. cit., pp. 97-100.

certain prominent Caracas homes, and that Matos, currently in Europe, was its acknowledged leader. On November 21, 1901, the police raided the headquarters of the Caracas revolutionary committee and arrested its members.¹ An embargo was subsequently set on all of Matos' personal property in Venezuela. It was discovered that one of the chief conspirators was General Ramón Guerra, the Minister of War himself.²

Guerra was made responsible for the uprising in Caracas, but, at the last minute, he backed down and left for the water-resort of Las Trincheras, pretexting ill health. He preferred to place himself out of the government's immediate reach. An order of arrest was sent against him, and shortly afterwards, Guerra was captured and imprisoned.³

Rumours now circulated that Matos and the "Mocho" Hernández--the latter from the bottom of his cell in San Carlos--had formed a pact and agreed to join forces. Contradictory stories were presented. Were not Guerra and Hernández former enemies in the field? Was it not true that Matos despised the "Mocho" wholeheartedly?⁴ On November 25, Castro received

1. Among these were prominent gentlemen of the business field like José Antonio Olavarria, Martín H. Pérez (Matos' brother-in-law), Manuel Acedo, Lucas Ramella and Francisco Travieso whose house was the one raided. The conspirators had apparently been betrayed by one of Don Francisco Travieso's employees, who sold out to the government for 40,000 bolívars --\$10,000. Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., p. 253.

2. Revolucion Libertadora IX, 57-58. November 21, 1901, Landaeta Rosales Archives Caracas.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., November 30, 1901.

a telegraphic report from the Venezuelan Consul in London:

"A suspicious steamship had left the day before, presumably carrying arms for revolutionaries in Colombia or Venezuela."¹ Could there not be a connection between the underground preparations that were actively carried out and the voyage of this "suspicious vessel"?

By mid-December, Castro found out that General Luciano Mendoza, the prestigious warlord whose troops had escorted him to the capital and who had recently been appointed to the Presidency of the Aragua State, had joined the revolution and planned to start the revolt in the early days of the new year. Upon hearing that he was about to be arrested, Mendoza decided to make the first move,² and, on December 19, 1901, from the small hamlet of La Villa, near La Victoria, the capital of the Aragua State, he issued the traditional proclamation that sanctioned the start of his insurrection. He had opened the way for Castro. The people of Venezuela had been deceived and their hopes betrayed. Castro, an "irresponsible hypochondriac," had caused the conflicts with Germany and Colombia . . . "Compatriots! To Arms! General Manuel Antonio Matos is our rightful leader. Matos, whose prestigious figure is respected in Europe can stop, with a mere gesture of his hand, the German squadron that already

1. José Rafael Nuñez, Cable of November 25, 1901, in ibid.

2. Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., p. 254. The original date of the uprising was January 6, 1902.

threatens our ports . . . Long live the Revolution!"¹

In Caracas, Castro immediately placed Juan Vicente Gómez, who had been elected first vice-President under the terms of the new constitution, at the head of a contingent of 1,500 men,² and on the morning of December 21, Gómez set out on Mendoza's trail. The following morning, at a place called La Casablanca, Mendoza's vanguard was spotted.³ The revolutionaries retreated. Minor skirmishes occurred throughout the day. At noon, the government recaptured the village of Villa de Cura.⁴ Mendoza continued to retreat. The revolutionaries had reached the narrow passes that guarded the entrance to the Guárico lowlands.⁵ In the evening, at a place called La Puerta, the ill-fated seat of one of Bolívar's most resounding defeats, a stiff resistance was opposed to the assault of Gómez's troops. The revolution suffered considerable losses.⁶ After one hour of combat, Mendoza, once again, ordered a prompt retreat. At the end of an all-night march, the revolutionaries entered the town of San Juan de Los Morros,⁷ the capital of the Guárico state. Tired and beaten, they proved unable to hold the position. Mendoza then chose to

1. Luciano Mendoza, Proclamation of December 19, 1901, Revolución Libertadora IX, 57-58, Landaeta Rosales Archives, Caracas.

2. Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., p. 256.

3. Victorino Márquez Bustillos, Dos campañas (Caracas: Litografía y Tipografía del Comercio, 1916), p. 4.

4. Gómez, Telegram of December 23, 1901, Revolución Libertadora, IX, 57-58, op. cit.

5. Martínez-Sánchez, ibid., p. 257.

6. Márquez Bustillos, ibid., pp. 2-9.

7. Martínez-Sánchez., ibid., p. 256.

flee to the hills that bordered the Carabobo and Guárico states.¹ His forces were divided. One part followed him in his flight; the other, under the command of General Francisco Batalla, turned south, towards the Cojédes and Portuguesa lowlands.²

Back in the Guárico, attention was now given to the movements of General Antonio Fernández,³ an old acquaintance, the former Commander of the expeditionary force that had been sent against Castro in the summer of 1899. Fernández had declared himself in revolt several days before. Gómez tried to keep him and his force of about one hundred men⁴ from uniting with Mendoza. Each day brought its share of skirmishes and shoot-outs. On the evening of December 30, a second encounter took place at La Puerta. After one hour, Fernández was defeated and fled.⁵ Gómez could then cable Castro, offering him a new victory for the eve of the New Year.⁶ As 1901 drew

1. Gómez, Telegram of December 23, 1901, ibid.

2. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 153.

3. Telegram of December 24, 1901 Revolución Libertadora IX, op. cit.

4. Gómez, Telegram of December 24, 1901, in Tello Mendoza, Ligeros Rasgos del General J. V. Gómez, op. cit., p. 53.

5. Gómez, Telegram of December 30, 1901, in ibid., p. 62.

6. Gómez, Telegram of December 31, 1901, in ibid., pp. 64-65. In the first days of January, 1902, an uprising took place near the port town of Carúpano, in the east, led by General Francisco A. Vásquez. A small affair: fifty men were involved at first. These nearly efforts lacked coordination and adequate preparation. Vásquez was defeated near a place called Cerro Negro and fled towards Carúpano. A similar uprising followed, led by a certain Colonel Márquez which was also subdued. See Andrés Brito, Remembranzas: La Revolución Libertadora en el Oriente de la República (Caracas: Impresores Unidos, 1945), pp. 26-29.

to a close, uprisings were taking place all over Venezuela. These were no longer isolated revolts.

Back in Martinique, Matos was joined on board the Ban Righ by several of the caudillos that were to lead the revolution. Among them were Nicolás Rolando, Horacio Ducharne, Pedro Ezequiel Rojas and the old General Domingo Monagas.¹ At sixty-three, Monagas embodied a long tradition of political action in the field of combat. He belonged to one of the most illustrious families of the Independence and post-Independence periods. The Monagas clan had ruled Venezuela as its personal fief for nearly twenty years between 1840 and 1860. Domingo's father, José Gregorio Monagas, had decreed the abolition of slavery in 1854. Willis, the English captain of the Ban Righ, noted that out of the 636 men that were taken on board at Fort de France, 84 were Generals. The ship's decks were now "alive with men, all armed to the teeth, while the tropical atmosphere seemed so thick with the smells of unwashed flesh, hot iron, engine oil and black humanity, that even the continual cloud of their cigar and cigarette smoke failed to smother it."² On New Year's day 1902, Mr. de Paula told Willis that he had sold the ship to Matos. At noon that day, the British flag was hauled down, the Venezuelan flag hoisted in its place, and the ship rechristened Libertador.³ Matos

1. Julio Calcaño Herrera, Bosquejo histórico de la Revolución Libertadora (Caracas: Litografía del Comercio, 1944), p. 3.

2. Willis, op. cit., p. 31.

3. Ibid., p. 33. De Paula disembarked at Fort de France. He had accomplished his mission for the revolution.

then solemnly read his revolutionary proclamation which was already being secretly circulated on the Venezuelan mainland.¹

The Fatherland is groaning! The Fatherland is dying!

I am hurrying forth, bringing all the elements of warfare that we will need in order to strengthen our will, make it irresistible, and, at the same time, to serve as a union among all Venezuelans so as to save our beloved Venezuela from ruin.²

Several days later, the Libertador sailed off for the coasts of Venezuela where it had been declared a pirate ship by government decree.³ The new revolution had found its name: the "Libertadora" (the "Liberating One").

1. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 42.

2. As quoted in Nuñez, ibid., pp. 42-43. In his book of memoirs, Recuerdos, Matos did not include the text of this proclamation.

3. Decree of December 30, 1901, Revolución Libertadora, IX, 57-58, op. cit.

Chapter XVI

THE "LIBERTADORA" (I): JANUARY-JULY 1902

The "Libertadora" Revolution was unique among Venezuela's internal wars. It was not a deep revolution of masses or of classes like the Wars of Independence or the Federal Wars. It did not proclaim any political principle or doctrine that would alter in any way Venezuela's political institutions.¹ But, at the same time, it was more than a mere caudillistic uprising. It was unique insofar as the interests of Venezuela's regional caudillos were combined with those of the foreign concerns operating on Venezuelan territory. Matos formed the link between these two sets of interests and allowed their interplay. The caudillos served as the unconscious instruments of policies that went beyond the parochial disputes of local politics, while Mr. Matos, as a banker in the battlefield, became the prisoner of tactics that he knew nothing about.

The "Libertadora" Revolution saw Venezuela's provincial leaders take to arms according to a concerted plan, and unite

1. Brito, op. cit., p. 30.

their efforts to overthrow Cipriano Castro because they saw in him a menace to their own ambitions and feared to have their local authorities curbed. The "Libertadora" also, brought together men of all political and social backgrounds. Men who, like Santos A. Dominici, the former Rector of the Central University in Caracas, or like the young poet Baltazar Vallenilla Lanz, rebelled against the rule of what they had come to envision as a barbaric force. In short, the "Libertadora," like the Fronde in seventeenth-century France, was a revolution of princes, the reaction of feudal warlords against the potential encroachment of a rival, and eventually centrifugal, sovereignty. Cipriano Castro stood alone against the onslaught, while beyond the borders, beyond the seas, the foreign powers watched with interested eyes the events that were unfolding.

In his first message to Congress, on December 3, 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt, discussing the Monroe Doctrine had said: "we do not guarantee any state against punishment if it misconducts itself, provided that punishment does not take the form of the acquisition of territory by any non-American power."¹

To the British and German Chancelleries, this meant that the United States would not oppose an intervention on their part to satisfy their respective claims against Venezuela.

1. Theodore Roosevelt, Message of December 3, 1901, quoted in Chester Lloyd Jones, The Caribbean Since 1900 (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 220.

Thoughts of a possible joint action began to take shape. On January 2, 1902, the German Chargé d'Affaires in London, Eckardstein, sent a telegram to the Imperial Chancellor, Prince von Bülow, in which he reported that, after a later meeting of the German ministry, the British government would propose a joint action of the two countries against Venezuela, as soon as the situation there would become clear.¹ On January 20, Bülow informed the Kaiser about London's suggestion.² Because of the suggestion's own vagueness, and of the approaching visit of his brother, Prince Henry, to the United States, the Kaiser, who feared that such an intervention might damage Germany's relations with the United States, did not give his assent.³ Nothing more was said for the time being.

Back in Caracas, a new conflict had erupted between the German Gran Ferrocarril de Venezuela and the government. On December 26, 1901, Herr Knoop, the company's new administrator, protested, in a memorandum to the Minister of the Interior, about the use of the railroad for the transportation of troops and armament, on account of the damages that were caused.⁴ The Minister replied that the railroad had been previously used for such transportation without ever motivating a protest

1. Howard C. Hill, op. cit., p. 114.

2. Jones, ibid., p. 221, note no. 20.

3. Hill, ibid., pp. 114-115.

4. Note of December 26, 1901, Revolución "Libertadora," IX, 57-58, Landaeta Rosales Archives, Caracas.

from the company.¹ Given the current circumstances, Herr Knoop's attitude could be interpreted as one of support to the enemy cause. The government then imposed a compromise. The Gran Ferrocarril would acknowledge its obligation to transport troops, while the government, on the other hand, committed itself to pay for any damage caused.²

That same day, January 8, 1902, the representative of the Compagnie Francaise des Cables Télégraphiques, the French telegraph cable company, in residence at Fort de France, Martinique, received a note from the company's headquarters in Paris: "We are now answering your question about Mr. Matos. Yes, we saw him here several times and since he is supported by the Quai d'Orsay, we wish that he succeed in his ventures."³ Orders were then discreetly conveyed to Caracas. Every cable sent from any of the company's offices throughout Venezuela was to be transmitted--in coded language--to the main office in Caracas.⁴ Caracas would then become the main information center on the events of the "Libertadora" as they developed.

For the time being, the fight remained circumscribed to the Guárico and Cojedes lowlands, the llanos. Following Mendoza's and Fernández's revolts, the old General Luís Loreto Lima had taken to arms.⁵ Lima was an almost mythical figure among the llaneros, the inhabitants of the lowlands, who

1. Ibid.

2. Gaceta Oficial, January 9, 1902, in Revolución Libertadora, IX, 57-58, ibid.

3. Venezuela y la Compañía de Cables Telegráficos, op. cit., p. 78.

4. Ibid., pp. 79-80.

5. Martínez-Sánchez, op. cit., p. 258.

considered him the rightful heir of José-Antonio Páez, who, in turn, had been Bolívar's companion and one of Venezuela's most illustrious caudillos. The llaneros were accomplished horsemen, savagely brave. Their impetuous charges, carried at the point of their lances had proved redoubtable.

By the beginning of February, Gómez had established his headquarters in the village of El Tinaco.¹ Lima decided that he would now meet his enemy. He would incite Gómez to attempt a sortie and move to the open. There, he would become a vulnerable target for the five hundred lancers who awaited the battle. On February 6, El Tinaco was encircled.² Attacks were carried out throughout the day, but Gómez would not move. Finally, Lima lost patience, grabbed his weapon and, at the head of his lancers, ordered an all-out assault. In full daylight, lances opposed to rifle fire did not stand much of a chance. Luis Loreto Lima, an old man of another age was mortally wounded while conducting his last charge. As night fell, the "Last Centaur" died bravely, like a man.³ Dispersed elements of the revolution roamed about. Mendoza, Batalla, Fernández all tried to join the other groups that were now rising in arms in the west.⁴

By mid-February, Gómez was back in the hills of the Carabobo state, chasing the "Mochista" factions of a certain

1. Ibid., p. 261.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 262.

4. Ibid., pp. 263-266.

General Barráez. Gómez, who had come to know the region well, managed to attack his enemy by surprise. On February 25, Barráez was defeated.¹ Gómez then offered a generous amnesty in Castro's name.² He was later to recall: "When I pacified the Sierra, I had to burn many ranchos and teach these people to work."³ Gómez, so far had been successful in his military ventures. He had proved a capable commander and had won the esteem of his troops. On February 26, he returned to Caracas, in the manner of a victorious pro-consul.⁴

On February 26 also, Castro presented his annual message to the Venezuelan Congress. He recounted all the uprisings that had occurred during his provisional term of office: Hernández, Peraza, Montilla, Rangel Garbiras and so many others, including this Mr. Matos who had "rented a boat and proclaimed himself, on his own account, leader of a revolution The achievement of these adversaries," he then added, "is here in front of you: the vital forces of our Fatherland sacrificed in the name of selfish interests! My achievement is victory; and victory is its own title of recognition." He went on to say: "With the foreign governments and, more particularly, with those who have representatives in Caracas, cordial relations have been sought Our relations with the United States have become more affirmed and the honourable

1. Pablo Emilio Fernández, op. cit., p. 127.

2. Ibid.

3. Gómez, as quoted in Ibid.

4. Ibid.

successor of the late President McKinley has offered, in so far as friendly and cordial relations, the most satisfactory guarantees"¹ Venezuela, Castro added, had acknowledged the claims over the damages incurred by foreigners during the Restoration Revolution, to the amount of 16,438,843 bolivars--\$3,150,000--part of which was earmarked for the German railroad. Considerable sums were also earmarked for the cancellation of the foreign debt. Of course, Don Cipriano admitted, certain delays should be expected in the consideration of the claims brought forth.² With the entire country up in arms, such delays were inevitable.

The Congress acknowledged Castro's message, recorded the rupture of diplomatic relations with Colombia, and sanctioned the renewal of relations, at the diplomatic level, with France.³ And Castro was wished well on his actions against the seditious elements of the Republic.⁴ On February 28, Cipriano Castro was officially elected Constitutional President of the Republic. The following day, he was inaugurated. In a special message, he then declared that due to the country's extraordinary situation, "all the obligations on foreign and

1. Cipriano Castro, Message to the Congress of 1902 in Documentos, tome 1, op. cit., pp. 74-78.

2. See Nuñez, op. cit., p. 47.

3. Since 1895, relations with France, at the diplomatic level, had been interrupted. An indiscretion in the release of a secret collective memorandum on foreign claims had led to the expulsion of the French Minister in Caracas, the Marquis de Monclar. For details, see Barral-Montferrat, "Le président Castro et le conflit Franco-Vénézuélien," Le Correspondant, vol. 224 (Paris, 10 Juillet 1906), pp. 85-89.

4. Venezuela, Congreso, Contestacion al Mensaje del Presidente de la Republica (1902).

domestic credit were to be suspended indefinitely."¹ Dr. Santiago Briceño, who had become President of the National Congress then rose to speak: "You are the best hope of our sick Fatherland. You must, above all, establish peace, for it is only with peace . . . that our legal institutions can effectively function."² But peace seemed far remote.

Castro had greeted Gómez warmly upon the latter's successful return from combat. The situation, however, allowed no time for rejoicing. On March 17, Gómez was appointed National Delegate for the country's entire western region where the revolt had assumed major proportions.³

The Ban Righ, or the Libertador, as it was now called, sighted the eastern coasts of Venezuela on January 2, 1902.⁴ Willis, who, upon realizing that he was commanding a pirate vessel, refused to carry out the instructions he was given, was ordered, at gunpoint, to obey and shut up.⁵ Matos then appointed Domingo Monagas to be the ship's Commander-in-Chief. The Libertador was supposed to be met, at its landing sites, by parties of insurgents who would take care of the landed cargo. But the plan, at first, did not follow through. The shores were deserted.⁶ It was then decided to move westward,

1. Quoted in Nuñez, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

2. Venezuela, Congreso, Discurso del Dr. Santiago Briceño, Presidente del Congreso Nacional (1902).

3. Pablo Emilio Fernandez, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

4. Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

6. Calcaño Herrera, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4. Chased by governmental contingents, most of these revolutionary parties were unable to meet their place of rendezvous.

toward Coro and the Falcón state, patrolling the coast "until, from certain ports, the signal--a white flag with a red square hoisted on the foremast by day, and three white lamps at night --was answered from the shore."¹

The ship's cruise was constantly slowed down by mechanical difficulties--accidents, or possible attempts at sabotage--that forced it to stop for repairs. By mid-January, the Libertador had stopped in Curaçao where a new contingent came on board. Among its leaders was General Gregorio Segundo Riera who was to head the revolt in the west, and the andino General Juan Pablo Peñaloza who, with his brother José Manuel had now joined the revolution.² Further mechanical troubles --the ship's engineers had let the crowns of the furnaces come down, thereby causing an accumulation of salt in the boilers--forced the Libertador to seek refuge in the Colombian port of Barranquilla.³ There, taking advantage of the extended delay, Willis escaped and left the Libertador to its saga.⁴ At the beginning of February, the ship was again seaworthy. Controversy reigned on board, as several of the "Mochista" generals proposed to attack the San Carlos fortress, which stood close by, and free General Hernández.⁵ The proposal was rejected. It was now considered imperative that any further

1. Willis, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

2. Calcaño Herrera, ibid., p. 4.

3. Willis, ibid., pp. 48 and 52.

4. Ibid., p. 55. Willis then returned to London via Jamaica. In London he published a colourful account of his days on the cruise of the Ban Righ.

5. Calcaño Herrera, ibid., p. 5.

delays be avoided. The Venezuelan shores were, again, scrutinized. On February 7, a government man-of-war, the Crespo, was captured after a short fight. Finally, on February 14, a major landing was staged on a sandy beach near Coro.¹ The Libertador, with Matos on board, then sailed back to the eastern coasts. In the west, General Riera now took over the operations, and, on February 19, 1902, the revolt was started in Coro and spread throughout.²

It even reached the Andes where a new invasion from Colombia took place. On February 22, Dr. Carlos Rangel Garbiras with a group of about four hundred followers, supported by a regiment of Colombian regulars--six hundred strong--crossed the border in a renewed attempt to overthrow Cipriano Castro. The attempt proved, once again, abortive. Rangel Garbiras and his troops were beaten and driven back into Colombia. The andino doctor had lost his cause and retired to his land of exile.³

Gómez landed at the port town of La Vela, near Coro, on March 19.⁴ He was no longer facing small guerrilla groups. The government forces--2,500 strong--were outnumbered. The

1. Calcaño Horera, ibid., p. 6.

2. Ibid.

3. Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., pp. 55 to 67. Among the other leaders of the new invasion were Generals Emilio Fernández and José Miguel Crespo. The two combats that decided on the fate of the entire operation were those of La Vega de la Mulita and of Las Cumbres, on February 24 and 25, 1902. See José Antonio Baldo, Cincuentenario de dos Combates (Caracas, 1953), pp. 7-13.

4. Márquez Bustillos, op. cit., p. 21.

campaign in the west lasted about a month. From Coro, where he had managed to establish a stronghold, Gómez was able to coordinate his moves with those of the other government contingents operating in the area. On April 15, 1902, in the heights of Urucuru, overlooking Coro, Riera and Peñaloza (Juan Pablo) were met in battle, and defeated.¹ In his victory proclamation, Gómez affirmed: "The prestige and virtues of these eternal enemies of virtue and order, entertained by vice and enervating passions . . . were merely a vain dream, an illusion."² The march of events, however, called for a renewed action. On April 27, Gómez returned to Caracas.³ Castro was now receiving alarming reports from the east.

The Libertador had reached the eastern port town of Carúpano on March 7th.⁴ On the 9th Nicolás Rolando the Supreme Commander of the revolutionary forces in the east was landed with his staff on the beach of La Esmeralda, a few miles away from Carúpano.⁵ Several days later, it was Domingo Monagas' turn to join his partisans on the mainland.⁶ The Libertador then sailed off for the British island of Trinidad, where Matos hoped to find the technical assistance to carry out the repairs

1. Márquez Bustillos, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

2. Gómez, Proclamation of April 26, 1902 in Tello Mendoza, Ligeros rasgos, op. cit., p. 87.

3. Márquez Bustillos, ibid., p. 27.

4. Brito, op. cit., p. 35.

5. Ibid., p. 36. Together with General Rolando came General José Manuel Peñaloza, who was his Chief of Staff and the young poet and Colonel, Baltazar Vallenilla Lanz who served as General Secretary.

6. Ibid.

that were still needed, particularly after the fight with the Crespo.

Rolando's arrival spurred the spirits of the revolutionaries. Contingents were regrouped, and the oriental states rose in arms. The revolution was, at first, successful. Out-numbered and outmanoeuvred, the government troops were forced to retreat. On the morning of April 22, marching out of the town of San Antonio de Maturín, on the road that led to the small village of Guanaguana, the bulk of the government corps in the area unexpectedly ran into a major concentration of revolutionaries that were holding their positions in the neighbouring village of San Francisco. The fight was fierce. By noon the revolution had won the day. One thousand rifles, 25,000 rounds of ammunition and eight hundred prisoners, among them a large number of officers, were captured.¹ Guanaguana was the revolution's first major victory. By the end of April, Rolando had captured the two major towns of Cumaná and Carúpano.²

From the Queen's Park Hotel, in Port of Spain, Trinidad, Matos addressed a letter to Castro, proposing an exchange of war prisoners.³ Significantly, the revolution was now in a position to bargain. Don Cipriano indignantly rejected the

1. Brito, op. cit., p. 50. For a detailed analysis of the battle, see pp. 47-50. The correct name for the battle should have been San Francisco, since it was the name of the small village where it was fought. For history, it remains that of Guanaguana.

2. Ibid., pp. 51-52.

3. M. A. Matos, Letter of April 30, 1902 in Castro, Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., p. 81.

proposal: "Between you and I," he replied, "there can be no possible understanding . . ., for you belong to that school of political traders who have been trafficking for many years with the interests of the Fatherland and even with the national honour and dignity."¹ At the same time, the Venezuelan Chancellery was dispatching streams of notes to the Foreign Office in London, denouncing the presence of the Ban Righ, or Libertador, in British waters and requesting that the ship be turned over to the Venezuelan authorities. Questions were raised about the British motivations in allowing the Ban Righ to sail off from London.² The Foreign Office showed little haste in answering Venezuela's claims. The British government repeated its concern over the seizure and destruction of British ships by Venezuelan gunboats (two new incidents had occurred)³ and seemed to ignore the Ban Righ case altogether. An enquiry was, again, conducted with the Colombian authorities who, again, confirmed that the Ban Righ was indeed Colombian. It was resolved, however, that as soon as the Ban Righ, or Libertador, would be seaworthy, the port authorities of Port of Spain would ask for it to leave.⁴

On April 29, Cipriano Castro appointed Gómez Supreme

1. Cipriano Castro, Letter of May 5, 1902 in Castro, Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., p. 82.

2. Great Britain, Cd. 1399, Documents No.

3. Ibid., Document No. 108, p. 127. The two new incidents involved the British ships In Time and Queen.

4. Ibid.

Commander of Venezuela's armies.¹ The following day, Gómez sailed off for the east. He landed a few miles away from Cumana. The town fell without offering any major resistance. With the coast covered by the three men-of-war that accompanied his expedition, Gómez then proceeded on to Carúpano where he arrived in the evening of May 5, 1902.² Rolando had concentrated his forces there. Gómez launched his assault on the 6th while the three men-of-war bombarded the town from the sea.³ Furious attacks were carried throughout the day, and were all thrown back. At about 2 p.m., Gómez was wounded by a bullet in the thigh and forced out of combat.⁴ The battle of Carúpano was lost: it proved disastrous to the government. Six hundred killed, three hundred wounded. Gómez and his forces were evacuated by sea.⁵

At the news of the revolution's new success, and having completed most of the indispensable repairs, Matos sailed off from Trinidad on the Libertador and landed at Guiría, on the Venezuelan eastern coast and continued by land to Carúpano where he arrived on the 21st.⁶ The Libertador had now outlived its immediate usefulness and was no longer in condition to

1. Pablo Emilio Fernández, *op. cit.*, p. 129. Gómez saw this title confirmed to him by Congress after Castro's overthrow. Gómez then remained Supreme Commander of Venezuela's Armed Forces until his death.

2. Brito, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 57. Those men-of-war were the Miranda, the Zumbador and the 23 of May.

4. Marquez Bustillos, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

5. Brito, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

sustain naval combat. It continued its route on to Colombia and was no longer heard of.¹

On May 21st, 1902, from his headquarters of El Pilar, outside of Carúpano, General Manuel Antonio Matos issued his first official proclamation as Supreme Head of the Revolution, calling upon all Venezuelans to rise against the common enemy, Cipriano Castro.² The revolutionary army was organized into twelve regiments,³ a number later increased to eighteen and then to twenty-two. Familiar names could be found among those who led the revolution: Dr. Santos Dominici, the former Rector of the University, who now acted as Surgeon-General; Luciano Mendoza, Domingo Monagas, Antonio Fernández, and even General Espiritu Santo Morales, one of Castro's oldest foes.

And the revolution began its march towards the center, while news came from the Orinoco delta region that, on May 23, the garrison of Ciudad Bolívar had risen to the cry of "Death to the Andinos!"⁴ The east was now into the hands of the revolution, and on June 7, 1902, Matos could appoint his first Civil and Military Commander to the "Guayana state."⁵ A

1. The trace of the Ban Righ was lost in the Colombian port of Barranquilla. Later reports state that the vessel was soon transferred to Colón, where it rusted slowly out of use.

2. The text of this proclamation is reproduced in Calcaño Horera, op. cit., pp. 13-15.

3. Brito, ibid., pp. 63-64. The command of the original twelve regiments was: 1st and 2nd, Nicolas Rolando; 3rd, Gregorio Segundo Riera; 4th, Amabile Solagnie; 5th, Lorenzo Guevara; 6th, Antonio Fernández; 7th, Gregorio Cedño; 8th, Jose' Ignacio Pinto; 9th, Luis Crespo Torres; 10th, Rafael Montilla; 11th, Santiago Sánchez; 12th, Espiritu Santo Morales.

4. Brito, ibid., p. 74 and Pablo Emilio Fernández, op. cit., p. 132.

5. Brito, op. cit., p. 76.

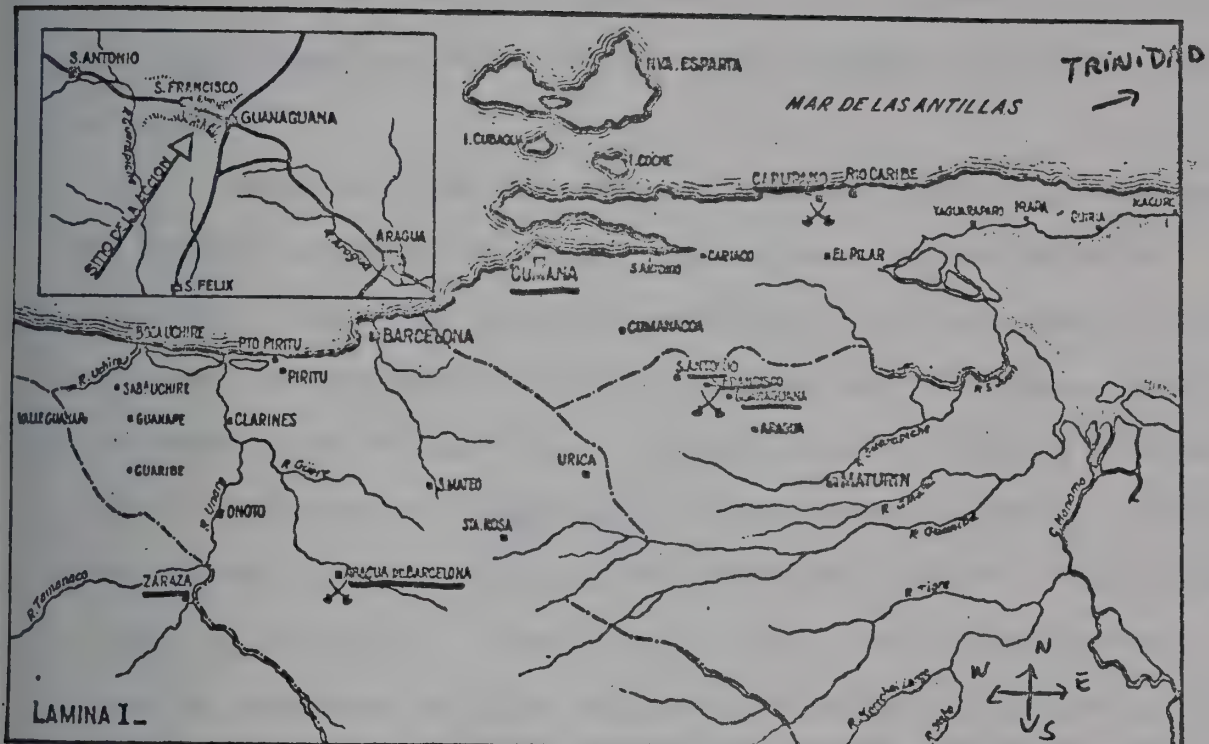
The "Libertadora" Revolution



The Revolution in the West

Source : Calcaño Herrera, *op. cit.*

The "Libertadora" Revolution



The Revolution in the East

Source: Julio Calcaño Herrera,
Bosquejo histórico de la Revolución
Libertadora

representative of the revolution, Dr. Pedro Ezequiel Rojas, was also officially appointed to Port of Spain, Trinidad.¹ The British authorities, though, despite the fact that Matos had decreed the elimination of the 30 percent import tax from the British West Indies, applicable to all ports controlled by the Libertadora, did not grant their recognition to the new appointee.²

Venezuela was now truly under the ordeal of total war. The entire east was in arms. In the west, after Gómez's departure, Riera and Solagnie were able to unite their forces and keep the government troops successfully in check. Coro was taken back on June 21.³ In the center, Luciano Mendoza, with a coalition of "Mochistas" and orthodox liberals, closed down on the town of Barquisimeto which fell after a twelve-day siege, on June 26.⁴ Gómez, on his part, badly wounded and utterly exhausted by five months of almost continuous fighting had arrived in Caracas at the end of May.⁵ In early June, Bowen, the American Minister in Caracas, suggested that the presence of foreign gunboats near the major Venezuelan ports might be warranted as a means to the protection of foreign

1. Great Britain, Foreign Office, F.O. 80, op. cit., Document 254.

2. Ibid., Document 237; also mentioned in The Port of Spain Gazette, 3 June 1902.

3. Brito, ibid., pp. 85-96. For details on the campaign see José del Carmen Manzanares, Campañas de Coro y Maracaibo (Coro: Imprenta de Benito H. Rubio, 1903).

4. Antonio Alamo, Referencias para la historia (Barquisimeto: "El Nuevo Heraldó," 1943). The town's resistance was carried out by General Rafael González Pacheco. See Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., pp. 210-215.

5. Márquez Bustillos, op. cit., p. 30.

nationals, and also as a deterrent force for any subversive attempts. Castro agreed.¹ The U.S.S. Cincinnati and Topeka thus arrived in La Guaira and Puerto Cabello at the end of the month.² Castro now decreed a blockade effecting Venezuela's eastern region including the Orinoco delta.³ Such a blockade proved impossible to enforce given the negligible strength of Venezuela's navy. Great Britain and Germany flatly refused to acknowledge the blockade, while other countries, such as Holland tried to demonstrate to Castro the unfeasibility of the whole operation.⁴

Finally, on July 5, 1902, Venezuela's Independence Day, Cipriano Castro declared himself in campaign and placed Juan Vicente Gómez, "a personification of all public virtues . . . a man who truly represented the tradition of the cause he served and the loyalty to its principles," at the head of the National Executive. In the meantime, he declared: "I shall devote to the conduct of war, the enthusiasm of my faith, the nerve of my activity and the effectiveness of my personal leadership."⁵

1. Interview recorded in a note from Bowen to John Hay, quoted in Nuñez, op. cit., p. 69. Also see Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 255.

2. Nuñez, ibid.

3. "Blockade of the Orinoco," United States, Consular Reports, vol. 72 (May, 1903), p. 125.

4. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 50.

5. Castro, Proclamation of July 5, 1902 in Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., p. 87.

Chapter XVII

THE "LIBERTADORA": (II) JULY-DECEMBER 1902 FROM LA VICTORIA TO FOREIGN INTERVENTION

Castro sailed off from La Guaira towards the east. Upon his landing at the port of Barcelona, on July 7, he was informed that the government forces had been badly defeated the day before at the town of Aragua de Barcelona which had since fallen into the hands of the revolutionists.¹ Castro proved unable to stop the advance of the revolution and, after two weeks, on July 24, he hastily returned to Caracas. In the west, after a fierce fight, Barquisimeto was taken back by the government. Castro's precipitated return, however, belied the inflated reports of the press which announced that "the enemy was fleeing towards the center."² Actually, the situation was close to desperate. Three columns coming from the east, west and center were converging on Caracas. In the Táchira partisans of General Juan Pablo Peñaloza had risen in arms, but were defeated by General Gumersindo Méndez, who commanded the government corps, in an encounter at the plateau of El Zumbador,

1. Brito, op. cit., p. 71.

2. Quoted in Nuñez, op. cit., p. 49.

fought on July 16, 1902, under the eerie glow of the full moon.¹

In Caracas, the French Consul, Monsieur Henri Quiévreux, was now supervising the services of the French telegraph cable company.² Coded telegrams were constantly exchanged between him and the managers of the cable stations throughout the country, particularly in the eastern region, providing valuable information on the movement of government and revolutionary troops. This information was, in turn, communicated to the Matos revolutionary headquarters. The French cable company and the French Consul in Caracas had thus become virtual agents of the "Libertadora."³

Meanwhile, back in London, on July 23, 1902, Count Metternich, the German Ambassador cautiously sounded Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Minister about the eventual project of a joint action against Venezuela.⁴ Since Castro had declared a suspension of all foreign obligations, the possibilities of seeing any claims satisfied seemed remote. The events of the "Libertadora" Revolution were followed with interest and concern.⁵ With the Venezuelan government

1. Baldo, op. cit., pp. 17-24.

2. The French cable company's representative in Fort de France, who was responsible for the cable operations in Venezuela, had been killed in the eruption of the Mount Pelé in May of that year. Quiévreux, being the highest French authority in Venezuela had then taken over. Venezuela y la Compañía Francesa de Cables Telegraficos, op. cit., p. 80.

3. Ibid., pp. 81-89. About two hundred such telegrams were sent.

4. Hill, op. cit., p. 115.

5. The British diplomatic archives of the Public Record Office show that Great Britain was kept well informed about the events of the "Libertadora."

paralyzed by this internal war, pressure could be easily applied to have it yield to any demands formulated. Lansdowne replied to Metternich's suggestion by indicating the British government's willingness to confer with Germany with a view to such an enterprise.¹ The idea of a blockade as an effective means of coercion was put forward.² Great Britain then took a lead in aggressiveness and started sending out "ultimata" to Venezuela without waiting for Germany.³ As might have been expected, these "ultimata" were not answered.

On August 3, 1902, Cipriano Castro, once again left Caracas. This time he headed southward, towards the Tuy valleys, where the armies of the revolution were converging.⁴ The "Libertadora" so far had met with success in the battlefield. Manoeuvres, however, were constantly slowed down by delays in receiving the shipments of arms and ammunition, and by the absence of an organized cavalry corps.⁵ The troops were tired; malaria and dysentery caused heavy losses. And the march of the revolution continued. By the beginning of August, Matos, Rolando and the eastern army arrived at the limit of the Guárico and Carabobo states. Headquarters were established first in the town of Zaraza, then in the village of Altavilla

1. Lansdowne, Note of July 23, 1902, Cd. 1399, Document No. 109.

2. Jones, op. cit., p. 222.

3. Hill, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

4. Nuñez, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

5. Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., p. 291.

de Orituco where it was decided to wait for the other two armies, before taking any further initiatives.¹ While in Zaraza, Matos had fallen ill with dysentery.² A crisis of authority was developing. Matos, actually, had never been very popular with the rank and file, or even with other leaders of the revolution. His aristocratic behaviour, his manners and habits--he fought throughout the campaign wearing white gloves and using a white parasol to protect himself from the sun-rays--³ seemed strangely out of place. Mr. Matos was unable to understand the close spirit of comradeship that related a leader to his men: in short, he lacked the towering and at the same time familiar personality of a caudillo.

In Zaraza, as he was recovering from his illness, Matos was visited by the old General Domingo Monagas on his way to join the revolutionary army of the center.⁴ Monagas was also seriously ill with dysentery, to the point that he could hardly stand on foot, and had to be tied to his horse's saddle. Monagas had come to bid Matos farewell. Bending down towards him, Monagas, with an arm over Matos' shoulder, repeated: "Don't forget Manuel Antonio, that under no pretext must we fight in La Victoria; Castro is going to wait for us there; we must outflank him on that position; we must defeat him where we choose, not where he wants."⁵ And the old caudillo left.

1. Brito, op. cit., p. 80.

2. Ibid., p. 82.

3. Ibid.

4. Calcaño Herrera, op. cit., p. 26.

5. Ibid., p. 27.

He died a few weeks later, on September 1, 1902 "surrounded by all his companions."¹ Even the government press in Caracas paid tribute to the memory of the old patriarch, who, at the end of his life, had been regrettably "led astray."²

Castro, in the meantime, manoeuvred with hesitation. His main goal was now to prevent the three revolutionary armies from uniting. He divided his forces, despatching a contingent under the orders of Generals Joaquín Garrido and Rafael González Pacheco to stop the march of the western army, while he himself set out to meet Rolando and the bulk of the eastern army.³ Alarming news came. An entire regiment, 1,500 strong had deserted to the revolution.⁴ In the center, Barquisimeto had, once again, fallen to Riera and his troops. Several days later the armies of the west and center had been united.⁵ Reports continued to arrive. In the Orinoco delta, two government gunboats had carried out a three-day (August 20-22) bombardment of Ciudad Bolívar.⁶ It was soon learned that one of the gunboats, the Restaurador, had used the American flag as a cover to get into the town's harbour. From the legation in Caracas, Bowen immediately "demanded an apology for the action and a salute of twenty-one guns for [his] flag."⁷ Castro then

1. Picón-Salas, op. cit., p. 163.

2. Quoted in Ibid.

3. Pablo Emilio Fernández, op. cit., p. 133.

4. Alamo, op. cit., p. 5.

5. Pablo Emilio Fernández, ibid.

6. Brito, op. cit., pp. 89-90 and Bartolomé Tavera Acosta, Apuntes para la historia (Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1903), pp. 4-12.

7. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 256.

cabled his Minister of Foreign Affairs to yield to Bowen's demands. The incident was closed at little cost.¹

In the last days of August, Castro received substantial reinforcements from the Andes, about two thousand men.² This was but a meagre compensation for all the desertions that had occurred. The Revolution now seemed to be gaining in spirit. At Tinaquillo, Garrido and González Pacheco met with the vanguard of the western army, but proved unable to contain its advance and was thrown back after an inconclusive and bloody fight.³ Assuming that the enemy would then attack Valencia, Castro set out to occupy the town first. After hurriedly crossing the Tuy valley, he arrived in Los Teques where he had asked the German railroad to put a convoy of trains at his disposal. After a night's rest, he was informed that the trains could not leave because the line had been blocked overnight by a landslide.⁴ Castro was astonished: "It has not even rained last night!"⁵ He ordered the convoy to leave anyway. At the point where there was supposed to have been a landslide, he found "a corporal and forty peons shovelling dirt and rocks over the tracks."⁶ It had been previously agreed between Matos and the German railroad company that the latter

1. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 256.

2. Pablo Emilio Fernández, op. cit., p. 133.

3. For details, see Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., pp.

324-330.

4. Cipriano Castro, La verdad histórica (Caracas: Garrido, 1948), p. 12.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

would try to detain Castro as long as possible. The tracks, however, were quickly cleared, and Castro arrived in Valencia at three o'clock that same afternoon,¹ only to find out that Mendoza and Riera had chosen to outflank him through the Carabobo sierra and were now moving southward. In a desperate attempt to keep the eastern and western armies from uniting, Castro left Valencia and also turned towards the south. Small clashes occurred: "Flores," "Mal Paso," "Canta-gallo."² Castro soon realized that he was fighting against small contingents left behind while the bulk of the western army was already out of reach.³ Plans were hurriedly reversed. Castro had been unable to keep the revolution from regrouping its forces. It was now imperative to maintain a line of communication open with Caracas, namely the German railroad line. Now that the latter's complicity with the revolution was evident, such a task would not prove easy. With a total force of six thousand men, Castro, who had returned to Valencia, evacuated the town and established his headquarters in La Victoria, where he waited for the enemy's next move.⁴

September was now drawing to a close. In Caracas, a decree was issued, declaring Matos a felon and a traitor to his country. He was subsequently condemned to a fine of 25,178,000 bolívars--\$5,000,000.⁵ Meanwhile, the armies of

1. Cipriano Castro, La verdad histórica, p. 13.

2. For details, see Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., pp. 318-321.

3. Brito, op. cit., p

4. Ibid., p.

5. "Juicio contra M.A. Matos," "Juicios Célebres," Landaeta Rosales Archives, Caracas, IX-40-Folio 104.

the "Libertadora" Revolution were united in the small village of San Sebastian, at the limit of the Aragua state, and from there proceeded to the Guárico town of Villa de Cura. A small contingent under the orders of General José Manuel Hernández Rón was sent out to interrupt the German railroad line. Hernández Rón, however, proved unable to fulfill his mission.¹ The revolutionary forces amounted to 15,000 men, the greatest concentration of troops Venezuela had seen since the time of the Federal Wars. In Villa de Cura, at Matos' proposal, the leaders of the "Libertadora" were convened in a War Council, to decide on the course of operations.²

At the end of August, General Domingo Monagas, in his position as General Chief of Staff, had devised a plan for the campaign that called for the combined western and central armies, placed under Luciano Mendoza's command, to invade the Andes in conjunction with an attack from across the Colombian border. Deprived of his major source of troop reinforcements, Castro would prove unable to resist for any extended amount of time to the frontal attack of the eastern army which, alone, was eight thousand strong. With a hold in the west and with the east already under its control, the "Libertadora" would have both defeated Castro and pacified the entire country.³ Monagas' plan, it was observed, was both militarily ascertained and politically shrewd.⁴ Mendoza, however, did not like it for

1. Brito, op. cit., p. 99, and Alamo, op. cit., p. 10.

2. Calcaño Herrera, op. cit., p. 50.

3. Alamo, ibid., p. 6.

4. Ibid., p. 7.

it meant that he would be relegated to a peripheral role in the whole campaign, which he considered unworthy. Several days later, the news of Monagas' death solved the problem altogether. His plan was abandoned, and Mendoza was subsequently ordered to unite his forces to those of the eastern army.¹ And in Villa de Cura, the debate was opened.²

As Matos explained, there were two courses of action: either march on Caracas and benefit from the psychological advantage of having the capital fall into the hands of the revolution, or march upon Castro and inflict him the coup de grâce. Mendoza immediately stated that there need not be any discussion; that the attack on La Victoria was the only conceivable solution; and that he guaranteed its successful outcome. Matos, remembering what the old Domingo Monagas had told him, raised some doubts. Mendoza brushed all objections aside: Castro could not possibly resist for more than three hours and would have to surrender in the end. "I know Don Cipriano," then said Juan Pablo Peñaloza, "he will resist in La Victoria and, if he is defeated there, he will take a stand in Los Colorados, then in Los Teques and finally in Caracas, but he will never surrender."³ Matos, despite the fact that he was the Supreme Commander of the Revolutionary forces, felt unable to argue with Mendoza who, after all, was considered one of the most experienced and prestigious caudillos in

1. Alamo, op. cit., p. 8.

2. For the following, I have relied on Calcaño Herrera's famous eyewitness account. Calcaño Herrera, pp. 50-52.

3. Ibid., p. 50.

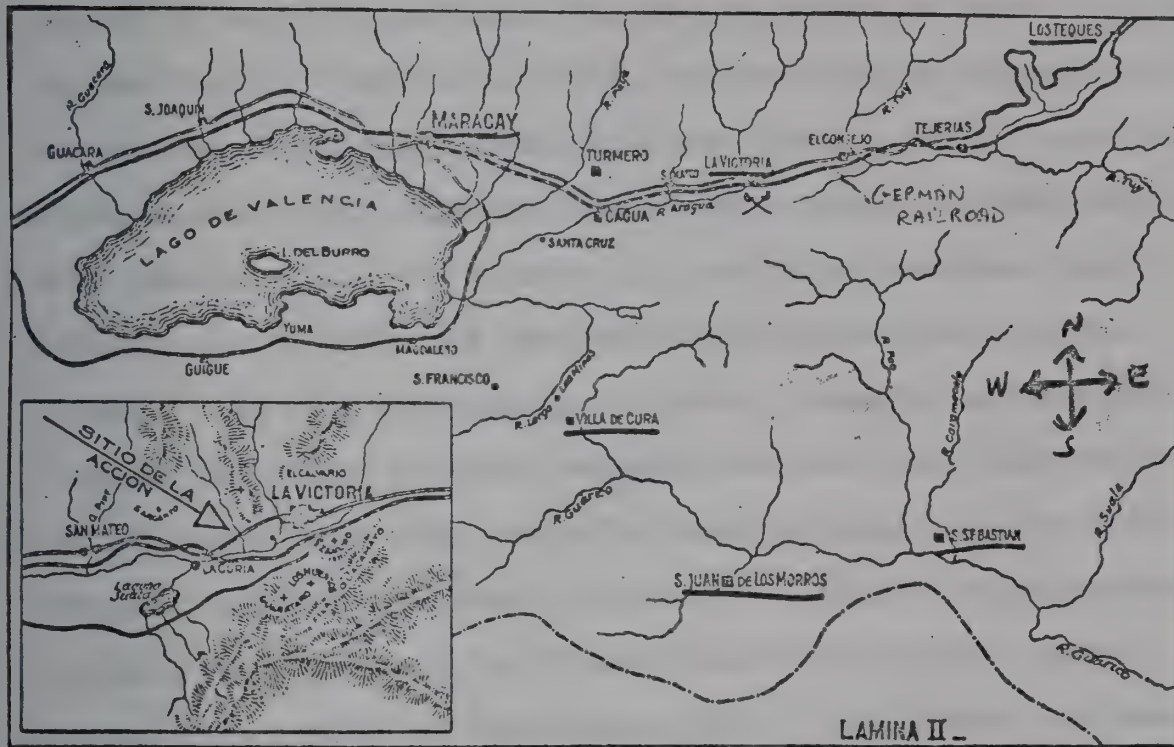
Venezuela. Like at a general meeting of the Banco Caracas board of trustees, Matos then called for a vote. Mendoza's proposed plan was overwhelmingly approved.

Why Mendoza pushed so strongly for an attack on La Victoria is a question that has not yet been resolved. A stubborn and rather foolish man, Mendoza might have been blinded by an unreasoned desire for a spectacular battle that would offer him the glories of a major victory. The general consensus had it, though, that such an attack constituted a blunder of major proportions. The numerical superiority of the "Libertadora" was not a wager of assured success. La Victoria occupied a strategically advantageous position as it found itself at the center of an open ring of small hills that converted it into a natural citadel. The revolution only disposed of 400,000 rounds of ammunition which would prove insufficient in any prolonged attack.¹ Finally--but this was not known at the time--La Victoria had not been cut off from its Caracas supply line. To many, including Matos himself, the La Victoria operation seemed doomed from the start. A conflict of authorities now prevailed among the leaders of the revolution as no one seemed to agree on the strategy of the attack. Matos proved unable to cope with the situation. On October 10, the armies of the "Libertadora" marched out of Villa de Cura and, on the morning of October 12, 1902, the battle of La Victoria began.² La Victoria, a strange omen, embodied in a

1. Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., p. 317.

2. Brito, op. cit., p. 97.

The "Libertadora" Revolution



The Battle of La Victoria

Source: Calcaño Herrera, op. cit

battle name.¹

During the three weeks that the battle lasted, there never was, on the part of the revolution, a combined attack on all fronts. Most of the time and ammunition were wasted in a number of daily skirmishes, characterized by an utter confusion in the fight.² For three weeks, the revolution launched its attacks on the hills surrounding the town, but was repelled while unsuccessful attempts to cut off the German railroad line were carried out. On October 13, Juan Vicente Gómez left Caracas and transferred the seat of the government to Los Teques.³ He then continued, by train, towards La Victoria, crossed the enemy line and entered the town with ammunition and reinforcements that were to prove crucial as time went on.⁴ And the fighting continued. Attacks followed counter-attacks. The hills surrounding La Victoria were covered with dead bodies that rotted in the blazing sun.⁵ Mr. Matos, on several occasions, visited the line of fire. The first time, his conspicuous white parasol served as a prime target for the government gunners.⁶ Despite Gómez's timely reinforcement, ammunition was running short on the government's side. Castro was already elaborating plans for an eventual withdrawal towards the sea,⁷

1. La victoria is Spanish for "victory."

2. Brito, op. cit., p. 98.

3. Lopez Contreras, op. cit., p. 50.

4. Ibid.

5. Today, several of the hills surrounding La Victoria are still dotted with unmarked graves.

6. Calcaño Herrera, op. cit., p. 65.

7. López Contreras, ibid., p. 53.

when, on October 18, a second train convoy, led by General González Pacheco, was able to carry through.¹ From then on, the initiative/^{of}operations rested with Cipriano Castro. Multiple sorties were attempted. The revolution was now suffering from an acute shortage of ammunition. The immediate positions surrounding La Victoria were evacuated. Incoherence continued to prevail on all endeavours. Finally, at dawn on November 2nd, a general retreat was ordered.² The "Libertadora" had lost the battle. La Victoria proved to be the largest single military encounter in Venezuela's entire history. It also proved to be one of the bloodiest: three thousand dead. "Six thousand heroes have forced over ten thousand mercenaries of the misfortunes of the Fatherland to kiss the dust,"³ announced the triumphant Castro.

The revolutionary troops marched back to Villa de Cura. There, it was decided that the "Libertadora" army would disintegrate. Each corps would return to its native region to continue the fight. Plans for future action would be sent out in due time.⁴ The blatant absurdity of this order illustrated the fact that the revolution had actually been destroyed by its

1. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 53.

2. The official account of the battle of La Victoria was written by General Diego Bautista Ferrer, La Victoria y San Mateo (1903), reprinted with a number of additional documents as: Triunfo de la Victoria obtenido por el General Cipriano Castro sobre la revolucion acaudillada por el General Manuel Antonio Matos (Caracas: Imprenta Bolivar, 1903). There is no general account of the battle from the revolution's point of view. Matos in his Apuntes sobre la Revolución Libertadora (Curacao, 1903), analyzes some of the battle's more controversial aspects.

3. Cipriano Castro, Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., p. 88.

4. Calcaño Herrera, op. cit., p. 69.

own hybrid nature. Venezuela's feudal lords had come together and proved, despite Matos' later statements to the contrary,¹ unable to unite, even for a short period. In La Victoria, the "Libertadora" had received its mortal blow. The defeated revolutionary contingents started their march. Riera and Solagnie returned west; Ducharne and Vidal east. For three months, Rolando, on his part, remained in hills bordering the Guárico state, unmolested by government troops.² Matos, on the other hand, continued westward and arrived in the town of Nirgua after several days of forced marching. In Nirgua, he separated himself from the rest of the troops and, with a small group of followers, marched up to the coast, at the mouth of the Tocuyo river where he sailed off for Curaçao, arriving there on November 13 in a state of complete exhaustion.³ Mendoza, meanwhile, followed the western army up to Barquisimeto. For him, the defeat at La Victoria was a personal disgrace from which he never recovered. Several days later, he left for Trinidad, never to return again.⁴ In Barquisimeto, a major contingent of the western army was able to find some respite.⁵ After several weeks reports were received on the advance of governmental troops. At the same time, vague rumours were heard that Venezuela had been attacked by foreign powers and that a blockade had been declared on its ports.⁶

1. As quoted in Brito, op. cit., p.

2. Ibid.; p.

3. Calcaño Herrera, op. cit.

4. Alamo, op. cit., p. 14.

5. Calcaño Herrera, ibid., p. 75.

6. Ibid., p. 76.

After his victory over the revolution, Castro returned to Caracas. He had won a battle, but, at the same time, he had proved ^{himself} a worthy leader who would readily share the hammock and daily ration of his troops. As opposed to Matos, Castro, the caudillo, represented the true product of his native land. La Victoria was already being called "the Monte Sacro of Venezuelan freedom" "the holy city of the Restoration"¹ and other such dithyrambic appellations. On November 16, Castro was informed that another invasion had taken place in the Táchira, led, this time, by partisans of Espiritu Santo Morales--a belated attempt at coordinated action with the "Libertadora." The reports, however, soon announced that the invasion had been defeated.² Certainly more alarming were the notes and reports that were arriving on the desk of Dr. Rafael López Baralt, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Throughout the summer and early autumn of 1902, Great Britain and Germany's plans of joint action against Venezuela were outlined. On August 8, the Germans suggested a joint naval demonstration.³ Germany, however, wanted to avoid reverting to a warlike blockade which would require approval by the Bundesrat. As an expedient, it was then decided to use the term "blockade" without specification of its nature.⁴ It was agreed that the operation would be deferred until November

1. Emilio Constantino Guerrero, Sangre Pátria (Caracas: J. M. Herrera Irigoyen, 1904), p. 49.

2. Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., pp. 67-72.

3. Jones, op. cit., p. 223, note 27.

4. Ibid., p. 223, note 28.

(i.e., the end of the unhealthy season). On November 13, the British Ambassador in Washington informed Secretary of State John Hay about Great Britain's intention to enforce its demands.¹ Hay replied that "the United States Government, although they regretted that European powers should use force against . . . South American countries, could not object to their taking steps to obtain redress for injuries suffered by their subjects, provided no acquisition of territory was contemplated."² The United States would not shield Venezuela behind the Monroe Doctrine.

On November 28, the New York banker Isaac Seligman was introduced to President Roosevelt by Senator Mark Hanna. Seligman who represented a syndicate of British, German and American bankers proposed a scheme by which the syndicate would pay off Venezuela's entire indebtedness, if allowed to retain 40 percent of the income of the two major Venezuelan Custom Houses of La Guaira and Puerto Cabello, and if the United States government was willing to guarantee the agreement. Roosevelt refused. The United States would not become the collector of a foreign debt.³ American public opinion seemed to follow on the same line. On December 5, the New York Times published an editorial under the title "Coercing Venezuela"

1. Quoted in Hill, op. cit., p. 116, note 2.

2. John Hay, quoted in ibid.

3. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., pp. 273-274 and Nuñez, op. cit., p. 55. At the request of I. and W. Seligman and Co., telegrams were sent to United States representatives both in London and Berlin "in case any one in interest might make enquiry on them," Hill, ibid., p. 119.

which clearly stated that "if the Venezuelans and their government fondly imagined that the United States would stand by them in an effort to cheat their creditors, they were woefully deceived. . . . We are not that kind of sponsor. . . . We do not 'stand for' fraudulent debtors."¹ Alarmed by these mounting tensions and by the wild rumours that were circulating in the Venezuelan press with regard to an impending invasion, Castro issued a public letter in which he affirmed that "[he] did not give any credit to these alarming versions, that the cause of [Venezuela's] national dignity was protected by the circumspection and true justice that existed in its friendly relations of mutual respect with the foreign nations."²

Despite these reassuring remarks, the following day, December 7, the British and German joint ultimata were presented,³ while Italy, who had asked to be allowed to join the coalition on account of its own list of unattended grievances, was also preparing a document on the same lines.⁴ Demands now included a consideration of the damages caused by the "Libertadora." The ultimata required an answer within a twenty-four hour delay, which López Baralt, the Foreign Minister, was unable to meet.⁵ The Venezuelan reply was issued on December 9 and proved altogether unsatisfactory.⁶ On December 8, W. H. Haggard and von

1. New York Times, December 5, 1902, p. 8.

2. Cipriano Castro, Letter to the Press, December 6, 1902, in Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., pp. 92-94.

3. See the text of these ultimata in Venezuelan Arbitrations of 1903, pp. 984-985.

4. See Jones, pp. 226, note 40.

5. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 59.

6. Venezuelan Arbitrations of 1903, pp. 971-973.

Pilgrim Baltazzi, respectively British and German Chargés d'Affaires in Caracas, left the capital for the port of La Guaira after declaring diplomatic relations with Venezuela to be severed and entrusting the care of British and German interests to Herbert Bowen and the United States Legation.¹ And, in the evening of Tuesday, December 9, 1902, Admiral Douglas, the British commander of the allied fleet that had just arrived in front of La Guaira, proceeded with the orders to seize all Venezuelan warships.²

1. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 60 and Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 257.

2. Nuñez, ibid., p. 60. The allied fleet was made up of seven German ships, the Falke, Gazelle, Panther, Niobe, Vineta, Amazon and Charlotte, nine British ships, the Indefatigable, Retribution, Charybdis, Prince Albert, Tribune, Quait, Colombine, Ariadne and Alert, and, later, of two Italian ships, the Giovanni Bassano and the Carlos Alberto. Manuel Landaeta Rosales, Los piratas y las escuadras extranjeras en las aguas y costas de Venezuela (Caracas: Empresa Washington, 1903), pp. 13-15. It must also be pointed out that most of those ships, particularly the German ones, were habitual cruisers of the Caribbean zone, in the same way the American Sixth Fleet is, today, affected to the Mediterranean area. See Great Britain, Foreign Office, F.O. 80, 1902.

Chapter XVIII

THE "LIBERTADORA" (III): DECEMBER 1902 - JULY 1903--FROM ARBITRATION TO THE END OF THE CIVIL STRIFE

Operations were quickly carried out. In a matter of minutes, the six Venezuelan gunboats docked in La Guaira were seized. The Venezuelan flag was brought down. The British boarded the Ossum and Margarita, while the Germans took over the General Crespo, 23 of May, Zumbador and Totumo. The machines of the Margarita were smashed and the captain of the Totumo was forced at gunpoint to abandon his ship.¹ On other points of the Venezuelan coast and in the neighbouring Caribbean islands similar events were taking place. In Guanta, the Restaurador was seized.² In Trinidad, the Bolivar was hailed by the British cruiser Charybdis, while docked in harbour at Port of Spain.³ Only the small Miranda managed to escape, losing its pursuers in the meanders of the Orinoco delta.⁴ At dusk of that fateful day, December 9, 1902,

1. Ramón Tello Mendoza, Venezuela ante el conflicto de las potencias aliadas (Caracas: Tipografía Universal), pp. 5-10.

2. Ibid., p. 44.

3. Ibid., p. 46.

4. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 68.

the six Venezuelan ships found in La Guaira were towed away. Three of them, the Margarita, Totumo and General Crespo were sunk the following morning.¹

In Caracas, the early confusion that had resulted from the alarming reports that were wired from La Guaira quickly turned into the wildest kind of disorders. Castro had immediately ordered that all British and German subjects living in Caracas be imprisoned in the Rotunda. Upon finding out about the order, Bowen rushed to the prison where he "assured the anxious crowd that they were under [his] protection and that [he] would have them freed."² From the Rotunda, Bowen was then driven to "Miraflores," the Presidential palace, where he found Castro "pacing up and down the patio" in utmost agitation. Seeing Bowen "he started yelling anathemas against the British and Germans."³ As Bowen was later to describe the scene:

I put my hand on his shoulder, and told him to sit down and be calm; and I gently pushed him to a sofa. When we were seated, I demanded that he give me permission at once to take over the British and German legations, and that written permissions be sent to me that very evening. He jumped to his feet, waved his arms and talked in torrents; but I persisted; and finally, when I threatened to send for some American Marines, he yielded. Then I demanded that he should set all the British and German prisoners free the next day I pointed out how foolish it would be of him to forfeit the good opinion of the world for the petty satisfaction of jailing a few unimportant Germans and Britishers. He finally consented.⁴

Tello

1. /Mendoza, op. cit., p. 49.

2. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 258.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

"The good opinion of the world . . ." such a thought could have lingered in Castro's mind. The immediate outburst had been controlled, but Don Cipriano now benefitted from a unique occasion to strike a pose for history. That same night, December 9, 1902, a proclamation was feverishly drafted, a document that was to stand in the long gallery of Venezuela's historical heritage in a place of honour next to the Declaration of Independence or some of Bolívar's more famous letters. The document of December 9, 1902 with its redundant, but effective, language can still strike a chord in the fiber of any man with a generous heart and a touch of idealism. For many years, like Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," the fiery proclamation of December 9, 1902 would be memorized by school-children who would recite, without really understanding their meaning, the proud words of righteous indignation:

Venezuelans!

The impudent boot of the foreigner has profaned the sacred soil of the Fatherland!

An act, unwonted in the history of cultured Nations, without precedent, without possible justification, barbaric because it is an assault against the most rudimentary principles of the People's Rights, ignoble because it is the product of the immoral and cowardly combination of strength and perfidy, is that which the German and English squadrons have just carried out in the roads of La Guaira a short while ago, as they surprised and seized, in a simultaneous and common action, three defenseless ships of our own Fleet that had docked into port for major repairs.

Venezuelans!

The duel is unequal, because the assault has been perpetrated by the two most powerful nations of Europe against this, our own country, which is barely recovering from long and painful ills and because it has been

accomplished in a treacherous manner, for Venezuela could not possibly have expected such an unwonted aggression, since it had not been preceded by any of the warnings used in similar cases. But Justice is on our side, and the God of All Nations, who inspired Bolivar and the plethora of heroes that accompanied him in the great task of bequeathing upon us, at the cost of great sacrifices, the gifts of Fatherland, Freedom and Independence, will be the one who, in these moments, decisive for the survival of our nationality, will inspire us in our struggle. . . and will assist us in the task, no less¹ great, of preserving our National Independence. . . .

In a sense, the proclamation overshadowed the entire conflict, and turned itself into the focal point of the whole affair . It was now a question of the "northern barbarians," of the "British lion" and the "Prussian eagle" tearing into the flesh of Venezuela's misery.²

The immediate reaction throughout the country was one of patriotic concern in its purest and noblest form, as the cry of la patrie en danger became the rallying banner. Castro cleverly took advantage of such a situation and decreed an amnesty for all political prisoners, calling on all of Venezuela's sons to unite in a common front against the enemy. Some reacted like Antonio Paredes who, after having spent three years in San Carlos, proudly refused to accept Castro's pardon and stepped out of his dungeon into exile. Castro was not overly concerned; his message was primarily directed towards the "Mochista" nationalists and their leader, José Manuel

1. Cipriano Castro, Proclamation of December 9, 1902, Documentos, tomo 1, op. cit., pp. 95-96. The document was actually written by Dr. Eloy G. González, one of Castro's secretaries. Yet, as Enrique Bernardo Núñez justly points out: "Others may claim to have written it, but the proclamation is Cipriano Castro, as it is also the majority of his contemporaries." Núñez, op. cit., p. 62.

2. Núñez, op. cit., pp. 42-63.

Hernández. The "Mocho," in an amazing show of patriotic naïveté, accepted Castro's offer. And, again, in front of a crowd gathered, this time, under the balcony of "Miraflores," Hernández and Castro repeated the scene of three years past.

"The Fatherland is in danger and I have forgotten all my resentments to come and defend it," said Hernández. Castro then replied: "men like us bear the crucet of suffering as an ordeal out of which we are able to come both stronger and free of all hatreds."¹ It also rained on that day of reconciliation, as it had rained three years back.² Hernández, who was later appointed Minister to Washington, urged his partisans to withdraw their support from the "Libertadora." Many followed; but some, realizing the blunder their leader had committed, reacted and tried to "save the honour of the Nationalist Party."³

Castro had attained his goal; the "Mocho" had lost face among his own followers. The "Mochista" party was badly divided/only partially supported Matos and his cause.

At the start of the foreign intervention, a number of truces had been concluded between the forces of the government, and those of the revolution--particularly in the western region.⁴ Positions were soon clarified and Mr. Matos, in a letter dated December 22, considered that, after all, the events

1. Quoted in Nuñez, op. cit., p. 63.

2. Ibid.

3. "Manifestation on Behalf of the Nationalist Party," quoted in Brito, op. cit., pp. 152-155.

4. See Briceño Ayestarán, op. cit., pp. 242-245 and Calcaño Herrera, op. cit., p. 76.

that had just taken place were not of transcendental gravity, and that "the armed attitude of the 'Libertadora' Revolution imposed itself."¹ Hostilities were soon renewed, but maintained on a minor scale as no new shipments of arms and ammunition were received by the revolutionaries.

And the events of the allied coercion on Venezuela continued to evolve.² Questions were being raised about the nature of the intervention itself. Count Metternich, the German Ambassador in London, had devised the theory of a so-called "pacific blockade," a convenient way to bypass the vote of the Bundesrat on the matter and reassure the United States about the intentions that motivated the whole operation.³ Some doubt soon arose as to the validity of such a concept of "war sub modo."⁴ The United States, in particular, objected, insisting that international law did not countenance a "peaceful blockade," and that the terms "blockade" and "peaceful" were contradictory in meaning.⁵

On December 11, 1902,⁶ the British merchant ship Topaz,

1. M. A. Matos, Letter of December 23, 1902, quoted in Calcano Herrera, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

2. The best contemporary account and analysis on the Anglo-Italo-German intervention in Venezuela is that of Jules Basdevant, "L'Action coercitive Anglo-Germano-Italienne contre le Vénézuéla, 1902-1903" in RGDI Publ, tome 11 (1904), pp. 362-458.

3. The innovative aspect of this theory of pacific blockade is discussed by Professor Lothar Kotzsch in "Die Blockade gegen Venezuela vom Jahre 1902, als Präzedenzfall für das moderne Kriegerrecht," Archiv des Völkerrechts, vol. 5, no. 4 (Tübingen, 1956).

4. See T. E. Holland, "War Sub Modo," Law Quarterly Review, vol. 19 (1903), pp. 133-135.

5. United States, Foreign Relations (1903), pp. 452, 454ff. See Hill, op. cit., p. 118.

6. For the following, I have relied primarily on the eyewitness account of these events, as recorded by Carlos Brandt in En la tiranía de Cipriano Castro (Caracas: Tipografía Vargas, 1955).

which was docked in harbour at Puerto Cabello, was boarded by an angry mob who pulled down the British flag, arrested the crew and knocked down the captain who had tried to resist.

Two days later, on December 13, two cruisers the German Vineta and the British Charybdis arrived in Puerto Cabello, demanding satisfaction for the incident. An ultimatum was delivered, conveyed by the American vice-Consul in Puerto Cabello, William H. Volkmer, which required an answer within the hour. The message was transmitted to Caracas, but the answer--whether intentionally or not--was delayed. And at five p.m. that same afternoon, without further warning, the Charybdis opened fire on the Castillo Libertador, the Puerto Cabello fortress, where Antonio Paredes had once taken his defiant stand. The Vineta, on its part, started a bombardment on the Solano fort which stood on the nearby island of Guiguiza. The shelling lasted for about an hour, and caused a wild panic among the Puerto Cabello population that fled the town and sought refuge in the backland fields. The two fortresses, already crumbling under the years were literally torn to pieces, and their meagre garrisons surrendered, while the British and German crews proceeded to occupy the ruins.

The Puerto Cabello incident caused considerable shock and shattered Metternich's theory of a "pacific blockade." On December 17, Great Britain and Germany officially changed their policies and on December 20, a regular blockade entered into force, affecting all Venezuelan ports that were de jure under the responsibility of the Castro government (this

specification was made to include the eastern and Orinoco delta region ports that were controlled by the revolutionary forces).¹ That same day, in the House of Commons, the British Prime Minister, David Balfour, stated that "there [could] be no such a thing as a 'pacific blockade'," that "evidently a blockade [did] involve a state of war."² Public opinion was now increasingly aroused by the Venezuelan affair.

In the United States, attention was given to the fact that President Castro had asked Bowen, on that same December 9, to "suggest arbitration to his government as expressed a wish that [the American Minister] act as arbitrator."³ The "impudent boot of the foreigner" could not help but reveal certain obvious necessities at compromise. On December 11, Venezuela proposed that "the present difficulty that [had] arisen respecting the manner of settling the claims which [had] been presented for alleged damages and injuries to British and German subjects during the civil war be subjected to arbitration."⁴ The message was transmitted the following day through the State Department. The Venezuelan proposal was, at first, judged too vague by both the British and German cabinets. On December 16, Lansdowne and Metternich issued similar views to that effect.⁵ At Hay's instigation, the American representatives in London and Berlin

1. Hill, op. cit., p. 118.

2. Balfour as quoted in Ibid., p. 119.

3. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 259.

4. Cipher telegram, Bowen to Hay, December 11, 1902 in Herbert W. Bowen, Correspondence and Cablegrams Relating to the Venezuelan Protocols (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), p. 1.

5. See Hill, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

repeated "with strong recommendation" the Venezuelan proposal of arbitration.¹ It now seemed pointless to resist. Great Britain and Germany decided to accept the arbitration and expressed the hope that President Roosevelt might serve as arbitrator.² Italy, that had officially joined the coalition on the same day, December 18, followed suit. On December 18, also, Bowen was officially entrusted with the Venezuelan interests.³ An agreement in principle had been reached but, as has been pointed out, agreement upon a principle is often far easier than agreement on the application of the principle to facts.⁴

An intricate network of pressures and shifts in public opinion⁵ had come into play. President Theodore Roosevelt's exact role in the Venezuelan crisis of 1902-03 has been a matter of controversy.⁶ It is beyond question, however, that the conspicuous presence of an American naval force in the Caribbean, under the command of Admiral Dewey, an outspoken Germanophobe, contributed in bringing into scope the possibility of direct involvement on the part of the United States,⁷ as Germany's

1. United States, Foreign Relations (1903), pp. 421, 424, 453.

2. See Hill, op. cit., p. 122.

3. Bowen, Correspondence and Cablegrams, op. cit., p. 4.

4. Jones, op. cit., p. 230.

5. For a valuable study on the media coverage of the 1902-03 crisis, see Paul S. Holbo, "Perilous Obscurity: Public Diplomacy and the Press in the Venezuelan Crisis, 1902-03," The Historian, vol. 32, no. 3 (May 1970), pp. 428-448.

6. Roosevelt's own later account of the 1902-03 events has been generally discarded as inaccurate. See Howard C. Hill, Roosevelt and the Caribbean, Chester Lloyd Jones, The Caribbean Since 1890, and J. Fred Rippey, Latin America in World Politics.

7. To that effect, see Seward J. Livermore, "Theodore Roosevelt, The American Navy, and the Venezuelan Crisis of

"bad naval manners were a matter of open suspicion."¹ In England, tensions were mounting, as reminiscences of the 1895-96 Guiana Boundary crisis were brought forth. The alliance with Germany, which had been kept secret, was now in public view, and confronted serious opposition. As the German Chancellor Von Bülow was later to write in his memoirs: "as after a storm, when Poseidon is no longer stirring up the winds, but when, for some time, the movement of the sea is still reflected in the swell, so the aversion and dislike of Germany in England, which had become acute during the Boer War, made itself felt."² Germany was now portrayed as the evil artificer who had entangled Great Britain into an alliance that would deteriorate its position with regard to the United States.³ The eventual conflict would then satisfy Germany's desire to carve a South American empire for itself. On December 22 a poem by Rudyard Kipling, the apostle of the white man's burden, was published in The (London) Times. The poem was entitled "The Rowers": the tired rowers as they return from the Southern deep, as they are about to rest their oars, learn that they must leave again, leagued with an open foe.

1902-03, "American Historical Review, vol. 51, no. 2 (January 1946) and John Garry Clifford, "Admiral Dewey and the Germans, 1903: A New Perspective," Mid-America, vol. 49, no. 3 (July 1967).

1. "American Feeling Towards Germany," World's Work, vol. 5, no. 5 (March 1903).

2. Von Bülow, Memoirs of Prince Von Bülow (vol. 1) (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1931), p. 64.

3. See, for instance, Sidney Brooks, "The Venezuelan Imbrolio," The Fortnightly Review, vol. 7 (1903), pp. 247-257 and Patriae Quis Exul, "Our Relations with Germany," The Contemporary Review, vol. 83 (April 1903).

In sight of peace--from the Narrow Seas
 O'er half the world to run
 With a cheated crew, to league anew.¹
 With the Goth and the shameless Hun.

"Sharply pointed and perfidious verses"² as Bülow was later to call them.

In Germany, such criticism was resented, while antagonism towards the United States' preponderant position in the Caribbean developed. A lonely voice was that of the socialist newspaper Vorwärts which attacked the German government for acting stupidly and secretly, and ridiculed the whole "banker war."³

The pattern of intervention by major powers into smaller countries for the purpose of debt collecting was not new. The Venezuelan conflict of 1902-03 did not differ substantially from a number of similar cases in past international relations.⁴ Its peculiar character, however, emerged from a conjunction of factors, or rather, from the symbolization of the roles played by the characters involved: the imperialist greeds of the Kaiser and Edwardian England countered by the disquieting concern of an equally unscrupulous Uncle Sam, while Venezuela found in Cipriano Castro the talented spokesman of its victimization and in the solidarity of the other Latin American countries the ideal support on which to base its cause. On

1. Rudyard Kipling, "The Rowers" in The Times, December 22, 1902, p. 9.

2. Bülow, op. cit., p. 642.

3. As quoted in Holbo, op. cit., p. 447.

4. See D. C. M. Platt, "The Allied Coercion of Venezuela, 1902-03, A Reassessment," Inter-American Economic Affairs, vol. 15.

December 29, 1902, Dr. Luis María Drago, Argentina's Minister of Foreign Affairs, addressed a note to Dr. Martín García Merou, Argentinian Minister to Washington in which he analyzed the norms of conduct that should govern commercial relations between governments. "That in all cases, the creditor country knows that it is contracting with a sovereign entity and it is an inherent condition of any such sovereignty that no executive proceedings can be carried out against it since such a means of repayment would imperil its mere existence. This principle of coercion could only cause the ruin of the weaker nations and their absorption . . . by the world powers."¹ Dr. Drago's message, the Drago Doctrine as it became known,² constituted a landmark in international jurisdiction and stood as the legal defense of Venezuela's position throughout the conflict with the powers of Europe.

The conflict itself was nearing its immediate solution. Roosevelt had declined to serve as arbitrator.³ Bowen arrived in Washington at the beginning of January. Negotiations were initiated which dragged on for about six weeks, a delay due, in large part, to a disagreement between Bowen and the representatives of the allied powers over the securities to be given by Venezuela to guarantee the payment of the claims, and over the question of priority of payment.⁴

1. Luis María Drago, La República Argentina y el Caso de Venezuela (Buenos Aires: Coni Hermanos, 1903), pp. 2-3.

2. See the article by H. A. Moulin, "La Doctrine de Drago," in RGDI Publ. (1907), pp. 417-472.

3. Jones, op. cit., p. 231.

4. Hill, op. cit., p. 142.

Indeed, it was no longer just the claims of Germany, Great Britain and Italy that were considered, but also those of Mexico, Holland, Spain, Norway, Belgium, France and the United States--a convenient occasion to settle all pending accounts.

During those six weeks, the blockade was maintained over Venezuela. But on January 15, Juan Vicente Gómez, acting as Chief Executive, issued a decree reopening the circulation between Maracaibo and the Colombian port of Puerto Villamizar¹--a measure of conciliation towards Colombia, but also a way to bypass the blockade. As a consequence, on two occasions, January 17 and 21, the German cruisers Panther and Vineta attempted to cross the bar on the Maracaibo Lake in front of the San Carlos fortress. On both occasions, they were thrown back by the fortress' guns. The San Carlos Commander, General Jorge Antonio Bello was hailed as the Themistocles who had avenged Venezuela's honour against the "impudent boot of the foreigner."²

During the negotiations in Washington, a conflict of personalities developed between Bowen and Roosevelt. Bowen, who epitomized the State Department's/^{then}current ideal of the professional gentleman-diplomat, did not like Roosevelt whose "manners and words suggested those of a braggart."³ The

1. Gómez, Decree of January 15, 1903, in Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., p. 73.

2. See César Leon, Honor y Patricetismo (Caracas: J. M. H. Irigoyen, 1906) and Rafael Soto Verde, El General Jorge Antonio Bello (Maracaibo: Imprenta Americana, 1906).

3. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 264.

question of preferential treatment prompted the allied powers --Germany, Great Britain and Italy--to ask Roosevelt, once more to serve as arbitrator. But Bowen, whose consent was needed, preferred to have the matter decided upon by the International Tribunal at The Hague. Roosevelt, who was "anxious for the honour" was reportedly furious.¹

The negotiations on the Venezuelan claims ended on February 13, 1903 with the signing of the so-called Washington Protocols by which Venezuela recognized its responsibility for the damage incurred by the nationals of the blockading countries and acknowledged all foreign claims. The "first line claims," comprising most of the debt bonds would be paid part in cash, part in securities of short term. For the payment of the "second rank claims," which included the private property damages, 30 percent of the total monthly income of the customs receipts of La Guaira and Puerto Cabello would be earmarked. The payments would be continued until the sums, determined by Mixed Claims Commissions to be convened in Caracas, were covered. Under an additional protocol, signed on May 7, 1903, the question of preferential treatment was then referred to the Hague Tribunal.²

On February 14, 1903, the blockade on Venezuela was

1. See the text of these different protocols in The Hague, Permanent Court of Arbitrations, Awards of the Tribunal, Protocols Signed between Germany, Great Britain and Italy with Venezuela, 1904.

2. United States, Foreign Relations (1903), pp. 476, 437.

lifted. The Venezuelan Congress refused to ratify the Protocols, basing its argument on the fact that they had been signed--on the part of Venezuela--under pressure and the use of force. However, both houses voted a motion which empowered the Chief Executive to carry out the stipulations of the Protocols: a bizarre compromise which was actually a convenient way to evade any responsibilities.¹ The Mixed Claims Commissions resolved the problem of the amounts due. The contrast between what was claimed and what was actually awarded^{could} give some ground for reflection upon the justice of the original demands. Finally, the Court of The Hague opened its hearings

SETTLEMENTS BY THE VENEZUELAN MIXED CLAIMS
COMMISSION OF 1903*

	In Bolivars	
	<i>Claimed</i>	<i>Awarded</i>
Belgium	14,921,805.	10,898,643
France	17,888,512	2,667,079
Germany	7,376,685	2,091,903
Great Britain	14,743,572	9,401,267
Italy	39,844,258	2,975,906
Netherlands	5,242,519	544,301
Spain	5,307,626	1,974,818
Sweden-Norway	1,047,701	174,359
United States	81,410,952	2,261,402
Totals	187,783,635	32,989,687

* These figures are summarized from the discussion in Ralston, Jackson H., "Venezuelan Arbitrations of 1903," *Senate Documents*, 58th Cong., 2nd Sess., No. 316 (Serial No. 4620). The award to the United States is reported in dollars as \$436,450.70, which is entered in the above table as bolivars calculated at par at \$193. There were, in addition to the above claims, others by France (see Ralston, p. 510) and by Mexico (see Ralston, p. 888).

on the Venezuelan case on September 1st, 1903 under the Presidency of the Russian Jurist and current Minister of

1. See Edgardo Vivas Salas, Nueva interpretación de la crisis internacional Venezolana de 1902 a 1903 (San Cristobal: Imprenta del Estado, 1948), pp. 74-75.

Justice, N. V. Mouraviev, proceedings were swiftly carried out, and the final sentence was handed down less than six months later, on February 22, 1904: it granted the preferential treatment to Germany, Great Britain and Italy.¹

Foreign perils had now receded, but Venezuela was in ruin--a laughing skeleton who sang and danced as if it refused to die.² In early March, a 30 percent additional "war tax"



A LAUGHING SKELETON

What Venezuelans think of Venezuela's political state is shown by this cartoon published in "La Prensa" of Caracas, with the following explanation: "Venezuela is a corpse--and is laughing. She is suffering and is a skeleton--but she has spirit and lives. Like the phoenix, she rises from her ashes; in this her force lies. Vainly do men try to humble her; she meets every emergency with sparkling vigor. Dying, she sings and dances. Her spirit will be her salvation."

1. For an account on the proceedings, see André Mallarmé, "L' Arbitrage Venezuelien devant la Cour de La Haye," RGDI Publ., tome 13 (1906), pp. 423-500 and A. G. de Lapradelle, "A la cour d'arbitrage," La Revue de Paris (15 Mai 1904), pp. 298-312.

2. James Barnes, "A Glimpse at Venezuelan Politics," The Outlook, vol. 73 (28 February 1903), pp. 479-483.

on all imports and on the major exports increased the already heavy burden of the Venezuelan folk.¹ And the "Libertadora" Revolution still covered part of the country. Venezuela was in ruin, and in a renewed state of civil war. From the Táchira, the all too familiar news of invasion and uprising was, once again, reported. Once again, General Espíritu Santo Morales had crossed the border to fight his old enemy from Capacho. Once again, and finally, Morales was defeated and thrown back.² On March 20, 1903, Cipriano Castro officially resumed his presidential functions and immediately appointed Juan Vicente Gómez to the task of fighting out the areas of rebellion that remained.

Even though the blockade had stopped any new shippings of arms and ammunition, Rolando, in the east, had been successfully keeping the government forces in check since December.³ He was now expecting an important shipment through the port of Rio Chico about one hundred miles away from Caracas.⁴ The shipment was landed on April 3.⁵ Informed of the impending threat on the capital, Gómez, on April 7, 1903 sailed off from La Guaira with an expedition of 1,500 and landed at Higuerote, a few miles away from Rio Chico.⁶ Several

1. Statistics Bureau, "Venezuela, 1903," Commercial Relations, 1903, vol. 2, pp. 340-344.

2. Landaeta Rosales, Invasiones, op. cit., pp. 74-77.

3. See Brito, op. cit., pp. 139-146, 161-166.

4. Ibid., p.

5. Ibid., p. 177.

6. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 60.

rounds of fire were exchanged with rearguards of the revolutionary contingent that had been sent out to bring the ammunition back.¹ Gómez had arrived too late. Yet, he still managed to unite forces with the troops of General Francisco Linares Alcántara, who had been chasing Rolando by land.² And the march resumed. There was some uncertainty as to Rolando's exact moves.³ The government troops, dispersed throughout, were the constant prey of small guerrilla bands.

On April 8, Rolando occupied the small village of El Guapo, and decided to meet Gómez there. The positions surrounding El Guapo were occupied by the government in the evening of the 9th, and, at dawn on the 10th (Good Friday), the battle of El Guapo began.⁴ The fighting lasted four days. Attacks, on both sides, were repelled at a high cost. Rolando soon ran short of ammunition. Reinforcements that he was awaiting were intercepted. He decided, ^{then,} to pull back. El Guapo was an inconclusive and bloody encounter: over 1,200 killed.⁵ Rolando moved further to the east, while Gómez returned to Caracas, where a major expedition on the revolution's western front was being prepared.⁶

Exaggerated reports had led Matos to believe that the battle of El Guapo had been a major victory for the revolution.

1. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 60.

2. Ibid.

3. Brito, op. cit., pp. 178-186.

4. Ibid., p. 181.

5. Rolando, Report on the Battle of El Guapo, reproduced in Ibid., p. 211.

6. López Contreras, ibid., p. 61.

Prompted by the perspective of further triumphs, he returned to Venezuela, and landed at Tucacas on April 30.¹ From there, he continued on to Barquisimeto that had fallen, once more to the forces of the "Libertadora."² Gómez, in the meantime, had left La Guaira, once again, this time with a contingent of two thousand. He also landed in Tucacas, a few days after Matos.³ Operations in the west were methodically carried out. Gómez knew that he was being served by time and, therefore, moved with little haste, with caution. The revolution could no longer unite its forces and was progressively losing ground. On May 22, the battle for the recapture of Barquisimeto began.⁴ The fight barely lasted one day. The revolutionary troops evacuated the town by dawn, on May 23, the anniversary date of Cipriano Castro's Restoration.⁵ The revolutionary army of the west had lost its cause. The troops were disbanded. Sporadic fighting continued until the end of May. Matos and the leaders of the western army, Riera, Solagnie, and others, finally agreed that it was pointless to carry on the struggle and sailed off for Curaçao, into exile.⁶ The war in the west was over. Numerous prisoners were made and sent out either to San Carlos, or ^{to} the tattered Puerto Cabello fortress.

From Curaçao, Matos now wrote: "the same patriotism

1. Calcaño Herrera, op. cit., p. 95 and Brito, op. cit., p. 196.

2. Calcaño Herrera, ibid., p. 96.

3. Ibid.

4. Briceno Ayestaran, op. cit., p. 286.

5. Ibid.

6. Calcaño Herrera, ibid., p. 104.

which yesterday guided our footsteps, imposes upon us now to end a war, that would otherwise be long and cruel. . . and only bring ruin to the country; let us therefore put down our weapons and return to our private chores."¹ As it was commented: "with Matos' palinode, the revolution had lost its weakness; it was now the government's task to deprive that same revolution of its strength . . . the merchant had disappeared, and the government and the country remained face to face."² In the east, Rolando refused to yield. In a defiant and Quixotic attitude, strangely reminiscent of that of Antonio Paredes, he had marched on to the Orinoco port town of Ciudad Bolívar.³ There, he waited for the final attack to come. On June 24, 1903, the village of Soledad, on the left bank of the Orinoco, opposite Ciudad Bolívar, was occupied by the government forces.⁴ No immediate action was taken. Prompted by suggestions from exiled leaders of the revolution that there might be a possibility to evacuate Ciudad Bolívar, via the Orinoco upstream, and continue the fight back in the central Guárico lowlands, where it had started almost two years before,⁵ Rolando, who now considered himself the rightful leader of the "Libertadora," moved to act according to that plan. But his initiative was thwarted.

1. Matos, Proclamation of June 11, 1903, in Matos, Apuntes sobre la Revolución Libertadora, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

2. César Zumeta, "La Revolución" in El Continente Enfermo (Caracas: Colección "Rescate," 1961).

3. Brito, op. cit., p. 217.

4. Ibid., p. 222.

5. Ibid.

On July 12, Juan Vicente Gómez and a massive expedition of three thousand, landed at Santa Ana, on the right bank of the Orinoco, and, from there, moved on to the immediate vicinity of Ciudad Bolívar.¹ Again, like in the case of Antonio Paredes at Puerto Cabello, negotiations for a surrender that would avoid any useless bloodshed was opened and did not follow through. Ciudad Bolívar would not surrender without fighting.² At three a.m., on the 20th of July 1903, Gómez launched a general assault, and after fifty hours of combat, the town fell to the government.³ Rolando and his followers were captured. Many were later sent to San Carlos. The "Libertadora" Revolution was over. The civil war had lasted one year, seven months, and two days. It had involved about 40,000 combatants and cost around 12,000 lives.⁴ An era in Venezuela's history had gone by.

1. Brito, op. cit., p. 225. Gómez had previously liquidated small nests of rebellion along the eastern coast, where Antonio Paredes among others, had attempted a landing.

2. Ibid., pp. 227-242.

3. Ibid., pp. 242ff.

4. Martínez Sánchez, op. cit., p. 355.

Chapter XIX

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLUTION: THE END OF CASTRO'S RULE

On August 3, 1903, Juan Vicente Gómez triumphantly returned to Caracas.¹ He was greeted in La Guaira by Castro himself and escorted afterwards through the streets of the capital by cheering crowds. The "Libertadora" had consecrated Gómez's military abilities. In fact, without Gómez, it seemed doubtful that Castro could have remained in power. Don Cipriano was now called "The Saviour of the Republic." Gómez, in turn, was hailed as the "Saviour's Saviour," the man who had actually brought peace to Venezuela. Peace, the magic word.

Don Juan Vicente resumed his functions of vice-President as if nothing had happened while Cipriano Castro, surrounded by ambitious councillors and base flatterers, and lulled by the daily torrents of adulation that were poured out of such sources as El Constitucional, the government newspaper, entrusted since its foundation in 1901 to the diligent care of Gumersindo Rivas, became more and more isolated from the

1. See Picon-Salas, op. cit., pp. 211-213.

outside reality. Juan Vicente Gómez waited and cultivated his friendships, particularly that of the kind Doña Zoila, Castro's wife, whose gentle manner had won her a general affection and respect.

It was the year 1903. In Colombia, the "War of the Thousand Days" came to an end. Liberals and Conservatives had signed a truce. Mutual promises were made. It was decided, to avoid any future bloodshed, that powers would be equally shared by both groups. 1903 was also the year of the Panamá insurrection--carefully instigated and abetted by the United States with the help of a French adventurer, Philippe Bunau-Varilla. Panamá was officially detached from Colombia and made into an independent republic which immediately ceded to the United States a corridor, ten miles wide, across the isthmus for the construction of the canal.

Theodore Roosevelt and the United States were now the symbols of a new preponderance over the Latin American continent: the pax americana at the threshold of its expansion. And the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, one of the most illustrious poets of the Spanish language, could stand defiantly and cry out:

Tened cuidado. Vive la América española!
Hay mil cachorros sueltos del León español.
Se necesitaría, Roosevelt, ser, por Dios mismo,
y Riflero terrible y el fuerte Cazador
para poder tenernos en vuestras ferreas garras
y, pues contais con todo, falta una cosa,
Dios!

Beware. Spanish America lives!
 The Spanish lion has let a thousand cubs loose.
 You would need, Roosevelt, to be, on God's own will,

Both the fearful Gunman and the strong Hunter
 To hold us all your iron claws
 And, though you may have everything, there still
 remains one thing you lack,
 God!¹

Meanwhile, Cipriano Castro danced. The end of the "Libertadora" had dispelled all fears of impending insurrections. Countless balls, brilliant receptions, splendid parties were given in the honour of the President who had not only vanquished rebellion, but also withstood the assault of the "impudent boot of the foreigner." Castro, the Restoration, and, in a way, Venezuela as a whole were now swirling on the tempo of a glamorously intoxicating waltz.²

Amidst the general euphoria, enquiries were made, which soon cast light upon the direct involvement of foreign interests in the course of the "Libertadora" Revolution. The New York and Bermúdez Company was brought on trial before the Venezuelan courts. It was proved that the company had provided Matos with a total of \$145,000 and that it had also supplied food and other miscellaneous services to the revolutionaries.³ The company, in turn, argued--rather unconvincingly --that it had provided this sort of aid so as to keep the revolutionaries from invading its property. On the charges of

1. Rubén Darío, "A Roosevelt," Cantos de vida y esperanza, 1905.

2. Among these balls, certainly one of the more outstanding was the one offered by Castro and his wife to some of the more prominent members of the Caracas financial oligarchy on October 31, 1903. The ball has since been remembered as "El Gran Sarao de 1903," BAHM, Año II, no. 11 (Caracas, Marzo-Abril de 1961), pp. 97-146.

3. For details, see Carreras, op. cit., Chapter VI, part III.

helping Matos and the "Libertadora," the company was sentenced to a \$2,000,000 fine and, on July 21, 1904, all its property was seized by the Venezuelan government.¹ The Matos affair was actually only one out of several of the legal battles involving the "Asphalt Trust." In fact, the entire question of claims, particularly the American ones, left partially unresolved by the Mixed Claims Commission of 1903, was, once again, put to the forefront. Matters were made even worse when Bowen, who had returned to Venezuela by the end of 1903, discovered in the archives of the American legation in Caracas, a number of documents indicating that his predecessor, Loomis --who, by then, had attained the post of First Assistant Secretary of State--had been directly involved in important business transactions during his term of office in Venezuela.² Loomis, in several cases, had apparently been extended substantial benefits in exchange of his services and support. Bowen forwarded a copy of the documents on to John Hay, the Secretary of State.³ Hay, apparently at Roosevelt's instigation, tried to hush the matter altogether.⁴ The press, however, got word of the affair, and the Bowen-Loomis controversy quickly took the proportions of a major scandal.⁵ A scandal that was never

1. The Seizure of the Property of the New York and Bermúdez Company by the Venezuelan Government: A Statement by the Company (New York, 1907).

2. Bowen, Recollections, op. cit., p. 290.

3. Ibid., p. 291.

4. Ibid., p. 292.

5. See, for instance, "The 'Asphalt Scandal', Mr. Loomis and Mr. Bowen" in Current Literature, vol. XXXVIII, no. 6 (June 1906), pp. 481-483.

really resolved, as the charges were neither proved, nor denied.

Meanwhile, the "Asphalt Trust" controversy seemed to develop into a cause for major conflict. After the seizure of its property, the New York and Bermúdez Company had been appealing for an arbitration on its case. Castro flatly refused, and declared that the sentence of the Venezuelan courts would be upheld. Strangely enough, the United States now found themselves in the same position as Germany and Great Britain in 1902. Bowen, this time, was one of the most vehement advocates of immediate coercive intervention against the "ungrateful Castro."¹ His own controversy with Loomis, however, forced his recall from Venezuela on April 30, 1905.² The policy of the new Secretary of State, Elihu Root (Hay had died on July 1, 1905) was one of appeasement at all costs.³ One of the major objectives was to allay the suspicion and distrust of the United States in Latin America, that had followed the Panamá canal crisis. At the third Inter-American Conference which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1906, he declared: "We wish for no victories but those of peace; for no territory except our own; for no sovereignty except sovereignty over ourselves."⁴

1. See, among others, Herbert W. Bowen, "The Uniformly Successful Diplomacy of Cipriano Castro," Harper's Weekly, vol. (March 9, 1907), p. 342.

2. Nuñez, op. cit., p. 95.

3. See Embert J. Hendrickson, "Root's Watchful Waiting and the Venezuelan Controversy," The Americas, vol. 23, no. 2 (October 1966), pp. 115-129.

4. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, op. cit.

The golden age of American intervention and "Dollar Diplomacy" ^{not} had/yet come into being. And the Asphalt controversy lingered on.

The case of the French Cable Company also developed along similar lines. On November 3, 1903, the company was officially accused of serious breach of contract and brought to trial.¹ Quiévreux, the French consul, who had asked for a six-month leave on account of his health², was in Paris at the time. He knew that documents compromising him would soon be revealed. He appealed to his superiors to no avail.³ He then thought that he might find support from the Cable Company's headquarters in Paris. The directors, probably on account of what was at stake, pretended to be greatly surprised at the "story" he told them.⁴ On May 24, Quiévreux, in a desperate move, tried to reach the President of the Compagnie Française des Câbles, Monsieur Jéramec, through one of his own friends.⁵ But Jéramec, who had become the company's president just after the events of the "Libertadora", knew, of course, nothing of the case and could be of little support. The following morning, May 25, 1904, Quiévreux was found dead, asphyxiated, in his apartment of No. 5 rue de Villejust.⁶ He had apparently

1. Venezuela y la Compañía Francesa, op. cit., p. 104.

2. Evidence from Quiévreux's personal dossier at the Quai d'Orsay Archives, Paris. In his earlier post in Cuba, Quiévreux had contracted yellow fever.

3. Venezuela y la Compañía Francesa, op. cit., p. 104.

4. Ibid., p. 105.

5. Ibid.

6. Document included in Quiévreux's personal dossier, Quai d'Orsay Archives, Paris.

forgotten to close the gas jet of a stove on which he had made some tea before retiring.¹ Accident? Suicide to avoid public disgrace? Or, deliberate silencing of a disturbing witness? The question remains open.

At any rate, the cable company was found guilty on charges of abetting the Matos revolution. Its contract was cancelled and, on September 4, 1905, its offices were closed down. Negotiations on a new contract were soon under way, but events took a sharp turn as the new French Chargé d'Affaires in Caracas, Olivier Taigny, protested against the closing down of the company's offices, which he considered a violation of the company's rights.² Taigny also protested against the forceful and arbitrary expulsion of several French nationals who had tried to press their personal claims against the Venezuelan government.³ Castro who already disliked Taigny, as a person, found his remarks unadmissible. Protests were mutually exchanged. The conflict was finally resolved on January 13, 1906 when Taigny, who had gone down to La Guaira to receive the diplomatic mail on board the French liner Martinique, was told that he would not be allowed to disembark and was then forced to sail off. Upon learning that its representative had been treated in

1. Venezuela y la Compañía Francesa, op. cit.

2. For details on the controversy see Louis Rouvray, France et Venezuela: mise au point (Paris: Emile Paul, 1906).

3. These Frenchmen that were expelled were, in most cases, Corsican traders who lived in Venezuela's eastern port towns, particularly Carúpano. They were suspected of having helped Matos and his followers. See Venezuela: Politique Etrangère Relations avec la France, vol. IV, no. 11, Quai d'Orsay Archives, Paris.

such a fashion, the French government severed its relations with Venezuela.¹

The case of the French Cable Company brings forth the question of the deliberate intervention on the part of the foreign governments in the events of the "Libertadora." There is evidence that the Quai d'Orsay was aware of Quiévreux's role as a liaison agent for the revolutionaries,² but it took no action against him and, upon his arrival in Paris, in 1903, Quiévreux was awarded the Legion of Honour.³ It is always, of course, extremely difficult to assess the action of a foreign government in the internal affairs of a particular country. Most governments, indeed, try not to keep any records of such proceedings, or, at least, try to keep them as secret as possible. It can be safely assumed, in the Venezuelan case, that the interests of the major European powers as well as those of the United States lay with Manuel Antonio Matos and the "Libertadora."⁴

The revolution, however, had been defeated, and one

1. See Vénézuéla: Politique Etrangère Relations avec la France. Also, for an account on the Franco-Venezuelan conflict see Jules Basdevant, "Le conflit Franco-Vénézuélien," RGDI Publ., tome 13 (1906), pp. 509-559.

2. In the "Reserved" section of Quiévreux's personal dossier, which I have been able to consult, there are copies of the various telegrams which he directed during the operations of the "Libertadora," providing valuable information to the revolutionaries.

3. Evidence from Quiévreux's personal dossier.

4. Significantly, several years later, under the Gómez regime, it was Mr. Matos who, as Minister of Foreign Affairs negotiated most of the agreements on the resumption of diplomatic relations with the European powers and the United States.

of its major consequences was the waning of foreign investments in Venezuela. Disillusionment and bitterness succeeded the enthusiasm that had been the rule several years before. Significantly, on November 14, 1904, Alfred Jaurett, the editor of the Venezuelan Herald was expelled from Venezuela, on being accused of issuing false and slanderous statements about the country's current affairs (an article printed in the New York Herald had talked about "mass arrests" in Venezuela, and it was suspected that Jaurett had been the source of information for that article).¹ Upon Jaurett's forceful departure, the Venezuelan Herald ceased its publication. In January 1905, Castro decided to cancel the British operated Match and Salt Monopolies.² (He himself later gained substantial benefits on the Match Monopoly.) Such an action, three years before, would probably have alone justified an immediate intervention. Now, it hardly drew any reaction at all. The prevailing sentiment was one of disgust with the Venezuelan situation. In a book written on the unhappy experiences of those years, George W. Crichfield, an American who had tried unsuccessfully to run a plant on the Inciarte asphalt deposits in the Maracaibo lake region, was to affirm: "one cannot live and do business in Venezuela at the same time, this is certain."³ And for an

1. For details, see Carreras, op. cit., Chapter VI, pt. III.

2. See "Castro the Intractable," The South American Journal (April 11, 1908), pp. 418-419 and "English Concessions in Venezuela," Ibid (April 18, 1908), p. 445.

3. George W. Crichfield, American Supremacy, vol. 2 (London: Brentano's, 1909), p. 259.

entire decade, Venezuela was virtually ignored by foreign entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, Castro continued to dance and amuse himself. In April 1904, a new constitution had been enacted. The number of states was arbitrarily reduced to thirteen administrative units--a reverting to Guzmancista methods of centralization--and the election of the President was now entrusted to an Electoral Body of fourteen members, chosen by Congress from its own membership, for the express purpose of naming the President.¹ The following year, as the new constitution entered into force, Castro--as might have been expected-- was unanimously elected for the six-year term extending from 1905 until 1911 (his own current term was due to expire in 1907). The prestige of Cipriano Castro, the "Restorer" (the 1905 Congress had officially bestowed the title upon him) seemed to know no limits. Castro was now compared to Napoleon, Simón Bolívar, Julius Caesar, Frederick the Great, Alexander--even Jesus Christ.² And Castro soon convinced himself that he was indeed, "always triumphant, never to be defeated." He now freely indulged in heavy drinking and sexual excesses. These excesses were, in turn, exaggerated by his enemies who came to depict him as a raving maniac who took sadistic pleasure in piercing

1. Constitution of 1904, Articles 3, 70 through 72 in Mariñas Otero, op. cit., pp. 453-480. The thirteen states were now Aragua, Bermúdez, Bolívar, Carabobo, Falcón, Guárico, Lara, Mérida, Miranda, Táchira, Trujillo, Zamora and Zulia.

2. See among many examples A. M. Linares, Poema heroico (J. A. Segrestaa, 1906).

the hymen of young virgins with his bare fingers.¹

Castro had now also become somewhat suspicious of Gómez's attitude. Don Juan Vicente's calm and detached attitude--he had remained First vice-President under the terms of the new constitution--seemed almost enervating. On April 9, 1906, Castro suddenly decided to step down from office, and returned, seemingly, to private life.² This was actually a concerted move to test Gómez's trustworthiness. On May 23, the anniversary date of the Restoration, Castro issued a public Manifesto in which he declared that the burdens of office had forced him to seek a temporary rest, but that public opinion now called him back to the Presidency, and that such a move had aroused adverse feelings--implying Gómez's--but that if the entire republic called him back to power, he would return to the nation's capital. A massive and carefully staged public acclamation ensued--similar to that which had brought Guzmán Blanco back to power in 1886. Thousands of signatures were placed at the bottom of countless petitions, begging the

1. This and many other ridiculous stories can be found in Thomas Rourke, Gómez, Tyrant of the Andes (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1936). Castro, of course, entertained a number of concubines--a fairly common practice. Fernando Gonzalez in Mi Compadre, op. cit., p. 81, mentions seven of them: María Teresa Domínguez, Dominga Domitila Hernández, Rosa Gutiérrez, Luciana Méndez, Marcelina Fuentes, María A. Rodríguez and Blanca Gouvirand. These were all girls of a fairly low social status. Castro's offspring was exclusively illegitimate as Dona Zoila proved to be sterile.

2. The correspondence exchanged between Castro and Gómez on this event, a model of political cunning, is recorded in Documentos Importantes (Caracas, 1906).

"Restorer" to come back. Gómez, who had seen through this political comedy, played one of the cleverest diplomatic moves of his career and literally forced Castro back into power. But Don Juan Vicente would not forget the veiled threats that lay beneath Castro's renewed assurances of friendship and brotherhood. Cipriano Castro returned to Caracas on July 5, 1906, amidst a display of public enthusiasm unlike anything ever recorded in Venezuela's history. And, once again, the chorus of obsequious flatterers voiced the undying glories of this "new Caesar," in a grandiloquent language that reached summits of poor taste. And Castro resumed his drinking and wenching.

His health soon proved incapable of coping with these excesses. In August 1906, he was, this time, forced to step down from office and move the Macuto beach resort, near La Guaira. Gómez was, once again, entrusted with the Presidency. Castro suffered from severe kidney infection. Gómez was now growing restless, tensions were developing between more outspoken members of the Gómez clan and the orthodox supporters of Cipriano Castro. On January 27, 1907, one of Gómez's cousins, the notorious Eustoquio Gómez, shot, in a drunken brawl, Dr. Luis Mata Illas, the one-time Venezuelan consul at Cucuta during Castro's exile in the 1890's, now the governor of the Federal District of Caracas. Eustoquio was soon captured, tried and sentenced to a fifteen-year imprisonment. Don Juan Vicente did not move.¹ On February 9, Castro had to undergo

1. As soon as Gómez took over, in December 1908, he had his cousin Eustoquio freed.

surgery. In those days a kidney operation was a hazardous matter. Practiced by Dr. Revenga, the operation was only a partial success. After several months, infection appeared once more... Castro had resumed his office in May 1907, but was forced to relinquish it, once again, in November 1908. It had been decided that he would now travel to Berlin, where the famous surgeon, Dr. Israel¹, would perform the necessary operation. Castro, his wife and a small pageant left for Europe on November 23, 1908, on the French Transatlantic liner Guadeloupe.¹ At the time of Castro's departure, Venezuela was in the worst of all possible positions, internationally. Relations with the United States had been broken off on June 20 of that year. The following month relations were severed with Holland on account of the fact that the Dutch representative in Caracas had been providing his government with information that was considered slanderous to Venezuela and its ruler. In the early years of the twentieth century, Cipriano Castro had come to represent the worst of all "international nuisances."

November 1908 passed. December dragged on. Castro reached Berlin where a substantial credit account had been opened in his name--guaranteed by the Venezuelan government. News now came from Caracas. Accompanied by the shouts of "Down with the tyrant!," the offices of El Constitucional were

1. Pedro Maria Morantes, who, under the pseudonym of Pío Gil, wrote a number of satirical pamphlets on the Castro regime also travelled on the Guadeloupe and gave a colourful account of the voyage. Pedro Maria Morantes (Pío Gil) Diario Intimo (Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la Republica, 1968).

ransacked, pictures of Castro were hurriedly taken down and the numerous Castro Streets were quickly debaptised. On December 19, 1908, in a bloodless coup d'état, Juan Vicente Gómez had overthrown the Restoration and was now in power.¹

1. José-Rafael Pocatererra in his Memorias de un Venezolano de la decadencia, tomo 1, gives a famous, though somewhat inaccurate, account of the December events.

Chapter XX

A HYPOTHESIS IN HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Gómez had taken over, and immediately the prisons were opened and all those who had suffered the hardships of the "cruel dictatorship" that had just been overthrown were freed.¹ Gómez also immediately sought to negotiate agreements on all of Venezuela's foreign conflicts. In less than a year, all foreign demands were met. And Venezuela was at peace. Yet, the country was still shunned by investors. Soon, however, a new factor was to come into play: oil. Oil was discovered in Venezuela at a time when its use as a carburant was expanding. And Venezuela soon became one of Latin America's wealthiest countries. And Gómez continued to rule over a country that was at peace.

Gómez governed Venezuela for twenty-seven years, until his death in 1935. With oil, the entire economic, social and political image of the country was changed. And yet, the overwhelming impact of the oil revolution could only be explained

1. Actually, the number of political prisoners at one time during the Castro years never exceeded three hundred. Many were freed after serving short sentences and sent out into exile. For reference see "Presos políticos entre 1900 y 1903," BAHM, op. cit.

and, to some extent, even justified because, a decade before, another revolution had failed.

The "Libertadora" Revolution was the last upsurge of caudillism in Venezuela. It was the final manifestation of a phenomenon that gradually disappeared. Something had broken loose in 1903, something that seemed almost an inherent part of Venezuela's heritage and could be embodied in the candid remark: "Well, now that the war is over, what are we going to do?"¹ The fiery leaders of the "Libertadora" had met their fate and, in a way, the death of Rafael Montilla, the Trujillo guerrillero, symbolized the end of an age. In November 1907, he was literally cut to pieces by one of his peons with whom he had had a discussion²--an end worthy of a Shakespearean tragedy. Also worthy of a Shakespearean tragedy was the death of the unfortunate Antonio Paredes. He had remained nearly alone in his attempts to overthrow Cipriano Castro. Captured in the swamps of the Orinoco delta region in February 1907, he was shot, on Castro's orders.³ And Venezuela was at peace.

As an historian, one must then ask the question: "why"? Why was the "Libertadora" the last revolution of its kind? The answer is, of course, not easy to give. Was it

1. López Contreras, op. cit., p. 67.

2. "Andanza y muerte de un guerrillero," BAHM, Año VIII, no. 44 (Caracas, Septiembre-Octubre de 1966), pp. 29-32.

3. Paredes' death occasioned considerable controversy. It seems that Castro, who at that time was fairly ill, ordered in a fit of temper that Paredes be done away with. Political assassination, as well as political executions, are not a common factor of Venezuelan politics. See the appendices in A. Paredes, Como llegó Cipriano Castro al poder, op. cit.

because the Venezuelan people had lost faith in their local caudillos and therefore submitted in sheer disillusionment to the exacting rule of a central authority?¹ Was it because Cipriano Castro and Juan Vicente Gómez were able to impose, through victory in the battlefield, the principle of a unitarian government? Significantly, in 1904 a decree was issued on the foundation of a new Military Academy.² The first permanent bases were set for the establishment of a professional military class. Through the army as well as through the local jefes civiles, the andino domination extended over Venezuela.

The Andes region "conquered" Venezuela in the same way that Prussia "conquered" Germany and brought ^{it} under a unified rule. For nearly fifty years (1899 to 1945), Venezuela was governed by andinos. In fact, with a short interruption between 1945 and 1948, the andino domination could be extended until 1958. Today still, most of the officers in the Venezuelan army are andinos.

Juan Vicente Gómez carried out the task of political levelling that had started with Cipriano Castro's wild adventure of 1899. Castro was thus the fortuitous cause of a longlasting effect. Gómez has been called by many the "tyrant of the Andes," an absolute and ruthless dictator. Gómez was essentially immune to passions. He had come to consider Venezuela as his own domain and ruled it accordingly. He gave it order the only way he knew, through force; he gave it peace, a peace that

1. See Brito, op. cit., p. 255.

2. García Villasmil, op. cit., pp. 101-104.

brought prosperity, or at least a new dimension of wealth. Gómez, in many ways, was the supreme caudillo, the supreme embodiment of an historical past. The end of the "Libertadora" with the era of political and social levelling that Venezuela underwent, later allowed the oil revolution to maximize its impact on the country and its people. Such is the hypothesis in historical development which I have attempted to present in this study.

An old Venezuelan¹, who fought in the "Libertadora", once told my father: "There is one caudillo that has outwitted all his rivals; and that caudillo is 'El General Petróleo', 'General Oil'. He controls Venezuela more absolutely than any-one before him, and possibly than anyone after him. He has given our country a new life. We must never forget 'El General Petróleo'.

The old man spoke the truth. Yet he himself probably did not forget the fading images of Venezuela's civil wars. Wars of senseless and brutal fights, but that did not exclude gallantry and pathos. A pathos that was once recorded by the young poet Baltazar Vallenilla Lanz in verses written in the memory of a companion who had fallen in the field of combat:

Lo enterramos de prisa en la ladera
bajo un florido bucaral anciano
y cubrimos de lágrimas su mano,
la mano que domó la hostil trinchera.²

1. He was the late Dr. Ernesto Urbaneja Arismendi.

2. Baltazar Vallenilla Lanz, verses quoted in R. A. Rodríguez, Diccionario, op. cit., p. 825.

We buried him hurriedly on the road side,
Beneath an old bucare-tree in full bloom
And we covered his hand with tears,
The hand that once mastered the hostile trench.

EPITLOGUE

It was only when his unlimited credit account was cancelled that Cipriano Castro became fully aware of the precariousness of his situation. He still underwent the surgical operation. The intervention, this time, proved to be successful. He then directed a letter to Gómez in which he affirmed that he would "publicly announce [his] retirement from public life to the people of Venezuela," provided he was given the opportunity to come back.¹ Gómez did not answer.

Thus, after a period of convalescence, Castro decided to return to Venezuela anyway, via the island of Trinidad. "I believe God and destiny call me back to Venezuela. I intend to accomplish my mission there, even though it implies revolution."² He left on the same Guadeloupe that had brought him to Europe a few months before. Upon his arrival at Point-a-Pitre in the French island of Guadeloupe, on April 6, 1909,

1. Cipriano Castro, Letter of January 23, 1909, quoted in Francisco Salazar-Martínez "Una curiosa carta de Castro para Gómez," Historia de Bolsillo, El Universal (Caracas, April 17, 1971).

2. New York Daily Tribune, March 13, 1909, as quoted in J. Fred Rippy and Clyde E. Hewitt, "Cipriano Castro, 'Man without a Country'," American Historical Review, vol. 55, no. 1 (October 1949), p. 36. Also see The Independent, vol. 66, part 1 (April 1, 1909), p. 655.

he was officially informed by the English Consul that he would not be allowed to land on British territory (i.e. Trinidad). Castro then chose to disembark on the French island of Martinique, neighbouring Guadeloupe. He remained there for a few days, under medical care, and, suddenly, on the night of April 12, he was dragged out of bed in his underwear, put on a stretcher, placed on the Transatlantic Liner Versailles and sent back to France. A pathetic scene, that reflected the Great Powers' unanimous decision to have the "international nuisance" removed from the Western Hemisphere.¹

Castro stayed in Paris for a few months, then moved to Madrid (1910-1911), then to the Canary Islands (1911-1912), then back to Paris (1912), then to New York, where he underwent, upon his arrival on New Year's Eve, the humiliating process of the U. S. immigration system of that time.² He



THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY
Kept in suspense for no land wants him.
—Thorndike in Baltimore American.

1. The details of this incident have been recorded in Rippy and Hewitt, op. cit., pp. 36-53.

2. Cipriano Castro, La verdad histórica, op. cit., p. and "Cipriano Castro en los E.E.U.U.," BAHM, Año III, nos. 17-18 (Caracas, Mayo-Junio 1962), pp. 25-84.

led the hopping life of an outcast.

Again, rumours were circulating that he was preparing a revolutionary comeback to Venezuela.¹ This time, it was Gómez who had staged this "impending return," so as to declare the Republic in danger, and avoid talking about elections.² Castro, a sick and weary man, was no longer a threat to anybody. He finally settled down in Puerto Rico.

The end of the Castro regime inevitably brought some major changes. Celestino Castro, the faithful brother, the much criticized President of the Táchira, quickly crossed the border into Colombia where he died--in Cúcuta--in 1924.³ Carmelo Castro, Cipriano's half-brother also lived for some time in exile but was allowed, later, to return. He died in Caracas, in the late 1950's.⁴ After the ransacking of the offices of El Constitucional, Gumersindo Rivas fled, back to Puerto Rico. There, he was reported once to have entered into an argument with a young Venezuelan who heard him express himself about Venezuela in a most derogatory manner and who, after slapping him in public, reminded him: "Your successes there were only due to your cleverness as an unworthy man."⁵ Tello Mendoza and Torres Cárdenas also fled abroad but were

1. "Castro's Return to Venezuela," The Literary Digest, vol. 47 (August 16, 1913), p. 236.

2. For details see "La segunda invasión de Cipriano Castro," BAHM, Año III, nos. 17-18, pp. 119-219.

3. Marcos Figueroa S. Los dos Capachos, op. cit., p. 185.

4. Evidence from the author's family recollections.

5. R. A. Rodríguez, Diccionario, op. cit., p. 667.

soon allowed to return.

Upon Castro's overthrow, the leaders of the "Libertadora" returned to Venezuela and were appointed to positions in the 'early governments' of the new regime. Manuel Antonio Matos served for two years as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was given back his confiscated property and all charges against him were dropped. He died in Paris, in 1929.¹ Carlos Rangel Garbiras, who had been living in Barranquilla, Colombia, branded as a traitor to his country, was also allowed to return and was made, like most of the caudillos that had returned, a member of the Federal Council. He died in Caracas in 1910.²

This nine-member Federal Council was an innocuous body, of no real use, that was created under the new Constitution of 1909, primarily to satisfy the vanity of those caudillos who aspired to higher positions but who had not been included in the cabinet proper.³ Prestigious figures such as Riera, Rolando, Juan Pablo Peñaloza or Ramón Guerra were thus made "councillors." Some of them, like Riera or Rolando, conformed to Gómez's authority and, upon the dissolution of the Federal Council, returned to their native provinces, to live and die surrounded by consideration and memories. Others like Juan Pablo Peñaloza or Zoilo Vidal, "El Caribe," rebelled against the new ruler and fell in his hands. Juan Pablo Peñaloza, who at the time, 1931, was nearly eighty years old, was captured

1. R. A. Rodríguez, Diccionario, op. cit., p. 447.

2. Ibid., p. 646.

3. P. E. Fernández, op. cit., p. 328.

and sent to the Puerto Cabello fortress where he died, his feet chained together with a seventy-pound iron bar. "Flies filled his open wounds with larvae, and thus, saped by these disgusting insects, ended the martyrdom of this fighter."¹

Zoilo Vidal, on his part was imprisoned in the Rotunda of Caracas, where he went insane, and died after a long and painful agony.²

Then, there were those who, like Régulo Olivares, or Dr. Santos Dominici, served the regime for some time, then rose against the authority of Juan Vicente Gómez, but escaped from being captured. Olivares lived in Colombia throughout the Gómez years and returned to public life in Venezuela in 1936 as Minister of the Interior. He died in 1952.³ Santos Dominici, who had been Gómez's ambassador to Washington, Berlin, London and Paris, also returned in 1936 and was later appointed Minister of Health and Social Assistance. He died in Caracas in 1954.⁴

The "Mocho" Hernández welcomed Gómez's takeover as the dawn of an era of high expectations. While in Washington, he had incurred the wrath of Cipriano Castro because he had dared, in a series of grandiloquently "patriotic" letters,⁵

1. Rodríguez, op. cit., p. 576.

2. See José-Rafael Pocatterra, Memorias de un Venezolano de la decadencia (vol. 1).

3. M. A. Pulido Méndez, op. cit., pp. 100-103.

4. Rodríguez, ibid., p. 220.

5. This correspondence has been published in several ways, by Hernández himself in Ante la historia (Philadelphia, 1904), and by Castro in Inconsecuencia y traición, el "Mocho" en la "picota" (Caracas, 1904).

to criticize the policies of the Restoration. Hernández was, once again, accused of being a renegade, a traitor to his allegiances. The "Mocho" found himself, once again, in exile. Upon his return to Venezuela, he was made a member of the Federal Council. He soon became gradually disenchanted with Gómez's practices and took his ailing health as a pretext to resign his charge and travel to Europe for medical care. From Málaga, Spain and, later, from San Juan, Puerto Rico, he addressed a series of letters to Gómez, protesting his good faith, challenging that "the proceedings of the present administration [differed] more and more each day from the promises made."¹ He condemned the creation of new monopolies, the concessions granted to foreign concerns, "violating the sacred integrity of the Fatherland."² He revealed that Gómez had offered him an important batch of shares from Castro's confiscated cigarette monopoly.³ He even contended that Gómez's intention to create a central currency-issuing bank, that would enforce the circulation of its bills, would be "the worst of disasters for the unfortunate Venezuela."⁴

With clumsy honesty, Hernández, once again, had

1. José Manuel Hernández, Letter of October 28, 1911, in Rufino Blanco Fombona, Judas Capitolino (Chartres: Charles Garnier, 1912), p. 257.

2. Ibid., p. 253.

3. José Manuel Hernández, Letter of November 27, 1911, in ibid., p. 270.

4. José Manuel Hernández, Letter of October 28, 1911, in ibid., p. 264. Also see "Documentos del General José Manuel Hernández, BAHM, Año I, no. 3 (Caracas, Noviembre-Diciembre, 1959), pp. 49-74.

condemned himself to a fruitless exile. He participated in several of the attempts to overthrow Gómez, but succeeded only in giving of himself the image of a helpless and even pathetic old man, pursuing some wild dream further and further removed from reality. He lived in Puerto Rico for some time, then in Cuba. Finally, due to his health, he moved to New York where he died on August 25, 1921. He was sixty-eight years old.¹ He was called at the time "a pervert with the airs of a charlatan, a grotesque swindler."² He was in fact a sincere and honest failure, politically incapable, a remarkable anachronism.

An anachronism like all those other caudillos who submitted and retired into the mediocrity of daily life, into the monotony of old age, into the haze of oblivion, living with memories and manias, like the old General Abelardo Gorrochotegui who would spell his name as he was urinating on a patch of bare ground in his small garden, that he had prepared every morning to that effect.³

The only major figure that remains from the days of Cipriano Castro and the Restoration is General Eleazar López Contreras, the young boy of sixteen who ran away from school to join the revolution, now (1972) ninety years old. Minister

1. The Hernández Archives, compiled during his exile years, and currently kept at the National Academy of History in Caracas, show that the "Mochó" was extremely well informed about the current events of Venezuela.

2. Laureano Vallenilla Lanz, "Espejo de Redentores," El Nuevo Diario (Caracas, December 24, 1918).

3. This remarkable anecdote was revealed to me by Don Francisco Gorrochotegui, General Abelardo's son, and confirmed by several people who knew the General in his lifetime.

of Defense under Gómez, he became President of the Republic at the former's death in December 1935. His period of office, 1936-1940, opened the path to a democratization of the political institutions. The age of tyranny was over. Now retired to private life, the old General remembers his past.

The discovery of petroleum and the recovery of asphalt as a by-product of the new industry lessened the value of the natural asphalt deposits. Crichfield's Inciarte mine, in the Maracaibo region, was reopened in 1910, under a new management, but its importance soon declined.¹ On April 10, 1935, the General Asphalt Company sold for cash and an oil royalty its shares of the New York and Bermúdez Company to the Venanda Company Limited of Canada.² The railways were either purchased by the Venezuelan government or went bankrupt out of competition with road transportation.³ The age of rail, in Venezuela, like the age of asphalt, had receded into the past.

The dubious issue of the dispute between Bowen and Loomis on the New York and Bermúdez case served as the pretext for Roosevelt, who never really forgave Bowen for not letting him act as a supreme arbiter on the question of preferential treatment during the negotiations over the Venezuelan conflict of 1902-03, to have the former dismissed from the diplomatic

1. John C. Rayburn, "United States Investments . . ." op. cit., p. 35.

2. Ibid., p. 36.

3. John C. Rayburn, "Rail Transportation . . ." op. cit., pp. 40-46.

service with a reprimand, in June 1905.¹ Both Bowen and Loomis, in fact, had their careers ruined. Loomis, who had become Secretary of State ad interim at John Hay's death, resigned from his position, and from then on was only given figurehead commissions such as Special Ambassador to France to receive the remains of John Paul Jones, or United States Representative to the International Exhibition of Turin in 1911.² Bowen retired to the mansion of his forefathers, at Woodstock, Connecticut, and wrote his memoirs, Recollections, Diplomatic and Undiplo-
matic, which were published a few months before his death, in 1927.

Rafael Uribe Uribe, who had become after the end of the "War of the Thousand Days," "one of the most popular figures in Colombia after Simón Bolívar," was assassinated on his way to the Colombian Senate, on October 15, 1914.

The attitude of the intellectuals of the Positivist generation, when confronted with the Gómez regime, was twofold. There were those who, like the writers José-Rafael Pocaterra and Rufino Blanco Fombona,³ chose the road of exile and who, either from France, or the United States, fulminated in their writings the horrors of the dictatorship.

Then, there were those who, like Vallenilla Lanz, Gil

1. The Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), pp. 505-506.

2. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

3. Rufino Blanco Fombona, Judas Capitolino and José Rafael Pocaterra, Memorias de un Venezolano de la Decadencia (2 vols.).

Fortoul, Arcaya, Razetti or Zumeta accepted Gómez as a necessary and inevitable phenomenon, the embodiment of the Democratic Caesar, the guarantee that the disorders of the past would not reappear. They all achieved positions of renown, Vallenilla Lanz as President of the Senate, then Ambassador to Paris, Arcaya as President of the Supreme Court, Zumeta as Minister of the Interior,¹ Gil Fortoul as President of the Republic. Yet, they all maintained, to some degree, the disenchanted detachment of a generation who had sought to understand and analyze the problems of a tormented nation, and found itself out of tune with the uniform wasteland of an iron rule. Venezuela was at peace.

Castro lived in Santurce, Puerto Rico, from 1916 until his death; the sad, uneventful life of retirement in exile.² The Spanish writer Eduardo Zamacois, who visited him in 1919, described him as "a shabby, meagre little man with a brazen complexion Impulsive, imperious, a blend of both Trotsky and Philip the Second The legend of a man: a

1. In 1913, divergences of views with Gómez forced Zumeta to resign his charge. He was then appointed Consular Agent in New York, and spent most of his life outside of Venezuela, from one diplomatic post to another.

2. There is ample evidence that, until his death, Castro was being constantly watched by Gómez's agents. See Francisco Salazar-Martínez, "Agentes de Gómez seguían a Castro," *Historia de Bolsillo*, El Universal, January 28, 1971 and Marco Figueroa S., "Los que Vigilaban a Castro," *Pinceladas de Historia*, El Nacional, February 21, 1971. Also see "Las andanzas de Castro," BAHM, no. 13, Año III (Caracas, Julio-Agosto, 1961), pp. 91-95.

Conquistador with the airs of a bandit, regal, barbaric, but magnificent."¹

By mid-1917, the United States Government, worried by the fact that Gómez refused to declare war on Germany, approached Castro through the Naval Commander of the Caribbean Fleet, and suggested that Don Cipriano might just be the right man--with U. S. help--to take over Venezuela in this time of crisis, and declare war on the Kaiser. Castro refused: "We have nothing to do in this war. And anyway we could only offer a very small amount of material help. We have suffered too much to impose such a sacrifice on our people."² He had thus ended any possibility for a political comeback. He would not return behind the gunboats of Uncle Sam.

He spent his last years alone, almost forgotten. He died at midnight, on December 5, 1924, and was buried the following day in the San Juan cemetery. Reporting the event in El Heraldo de Cuba, José-Rafael Pocaterra was to write: "The tribe has lost its natural leader, its rightful leader, its only leader. I hated him in life, I fought him But now that he is dead, from the depths of my Venezuelan blood, admiration for his valour, for his energy, for his intelligence, moves me and covers my memory of him with a

1. Eduardo Zamacois, Article printed in El Diario de la Marina (Havana, September 25, 1919), and included in the José Manuel Hernández Archives, Caracas. For the other interviews of Castro during his exile, see Picon-Salas, op. cit., pp. 316-318.

2. Picon-Salas, op. cit., pp. 319-320. The data for this episode were given to Mr. Picon-Salas by Carmelo Castro, Cipriano's brother.

cloak of true sympathy."¹

Upon learning about Castro's death, Gómez, evoking memories of the past: "Don Cipriano really knew how to fight." This was probably the best eulogy he could have devised for his former companion and leader. He was now alone at last, free from the secret fears of an usurped authority. He then added: "Don Cipriano was only seventy-six years old. He was born in '58. He would have lived a lot longer if those fancy Valencia doctors hadn't ruined his health." And, with a tranquil face, he rose and told his aide-de-camp: "Well, now let's go to the movies."²

Doña Zoila, Gómez's former protector and confidant, was allowed to return to Venezuela. She lived in Los Chorros, a calm district, then in the outskirts of Caracas, and died there in the early thirties surrounded by universal consideration and respect.

On October 27, 1918, as the general European conflagration was drawing to an uneasy end, César Zumeta, probably

1. José Rafael Pocater, El Heraldo de Cuba, December 24, 1924, also included in the José Manuel Hernández Archives, Caracas. Of the millions Castro was supposed to have stolen abroad, the inventory of his property at his death showed only an amount of \$20,000. This record is kept in the Castro Museum of Independencia (Capacho Nuevo).

2. Picon-Salas, op. cit., p. 324. The scene took place in Gómez's hacienda in Maracay. It has been confirmed to me by several eye-witnesses.

one of the most lucid appraisers of his time, wrote a letter from his consular post in New York to President Gómez. "In August 1914, I wrote in Caracas' El Universal: 'The only thing that matters in this war is what will happen after it. It is a duel between the purple robe of kings and the ragged blouse of the workingman. It is the blouse that will triumph.' I am citing out of memory, only to show you that I have been thinking about these matters for some time. The events . . . have confirmed my premonitions. The radical doctrines of Europe will spread with major strength in countries where the people, ignorant and poor, are deprived of political rights. . . . This sort of agitation is dangerous among us, for public enemies will try to take advantage of the situation. Now begins, as I had affirmed on August 1, 1914, a new era in history. Nothing will stop the advance of a new social order. Any repression will prove useless. The politically fanatized masses will only submit to the person who will anticipate their needs and meet them within the bounds of practical reality. Anticipate yourself General . . . direct this revolution yourself . . . and you will save the country from an upsurge of passions that may well drive the established social order to shambles."¹

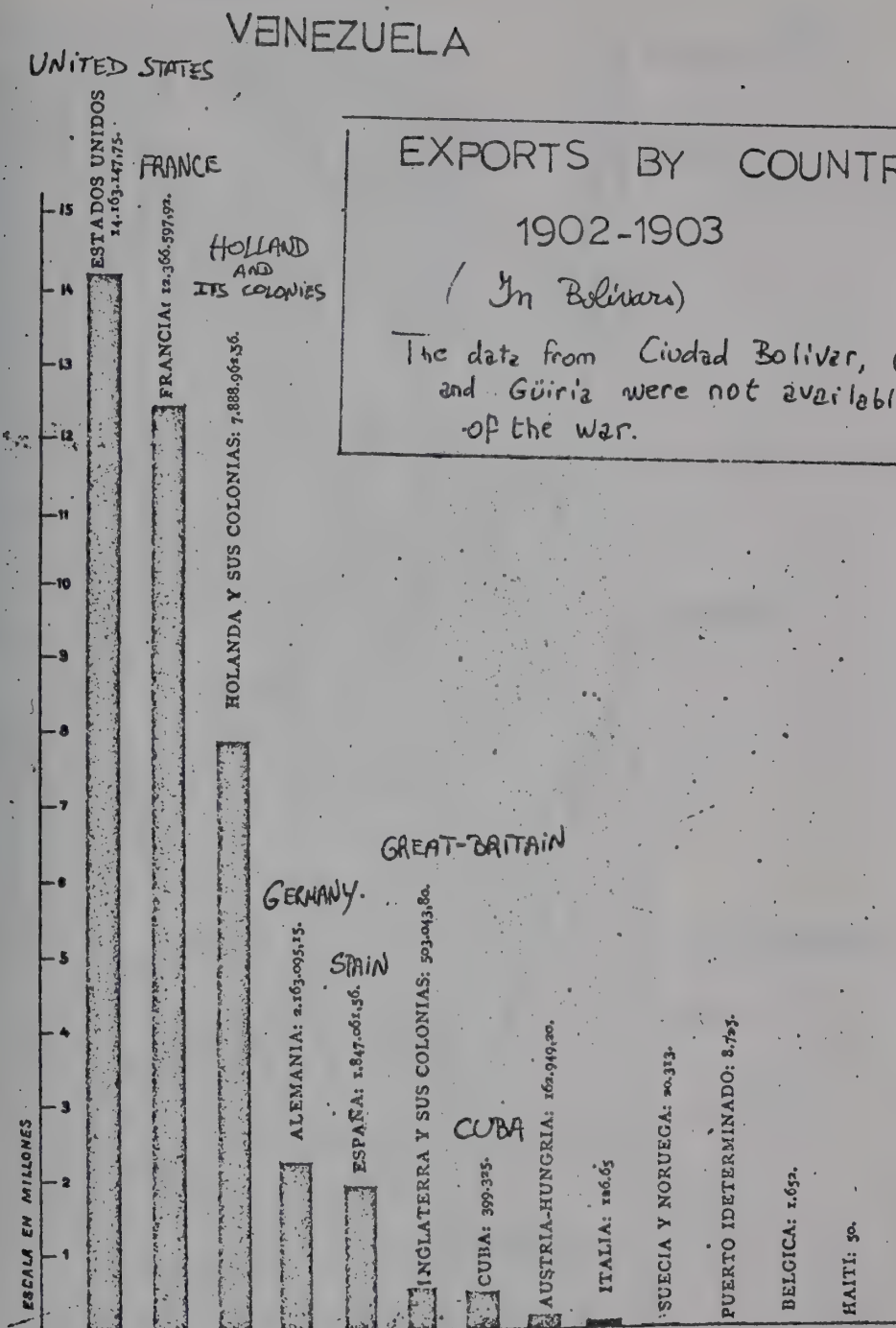
Gómez governed Venezuela like Sancho Panza governed his island, with ruthless common sense. He provoked a political

1. "Cartas de César Zumeta," BAHM, nos. 52-58 (Caracas, Enero 1968-Febrero 1969), pp. 192-193. Also cited in Marco Figueroa S. "Zumeta," Pinceladas de Historia, El Nacional, August 24, 1970.

table rase and laid the grounds for the overwhelming economic and social upheaval that took the form of black gold. The Guanoco oil field discovery, on August 15, 1913,¹ triggered the start of a new age for Venezuela, that the Great Depression of the 1930's, with the ruin of the already declining agricultural economy, precipitated. In a way, Gómez unconsciously led the most profound social transformation Venezuela had undergone since the Wars of Independence. Feudal times were dead forever. The numerous attempts to overthrow the tyrant, on the classical pattern of a caudillistic uprising, met with no popular support. A new society, a new generation, had been born. Gómez undoubtedly saw all this, but could not understand; he himself had outlived his time. He ruled absolutely for twenty-seven years, and died in his bed.²

1. For further details see Anibal R. Martínez, Chronology of Venezuelan Oil (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969).

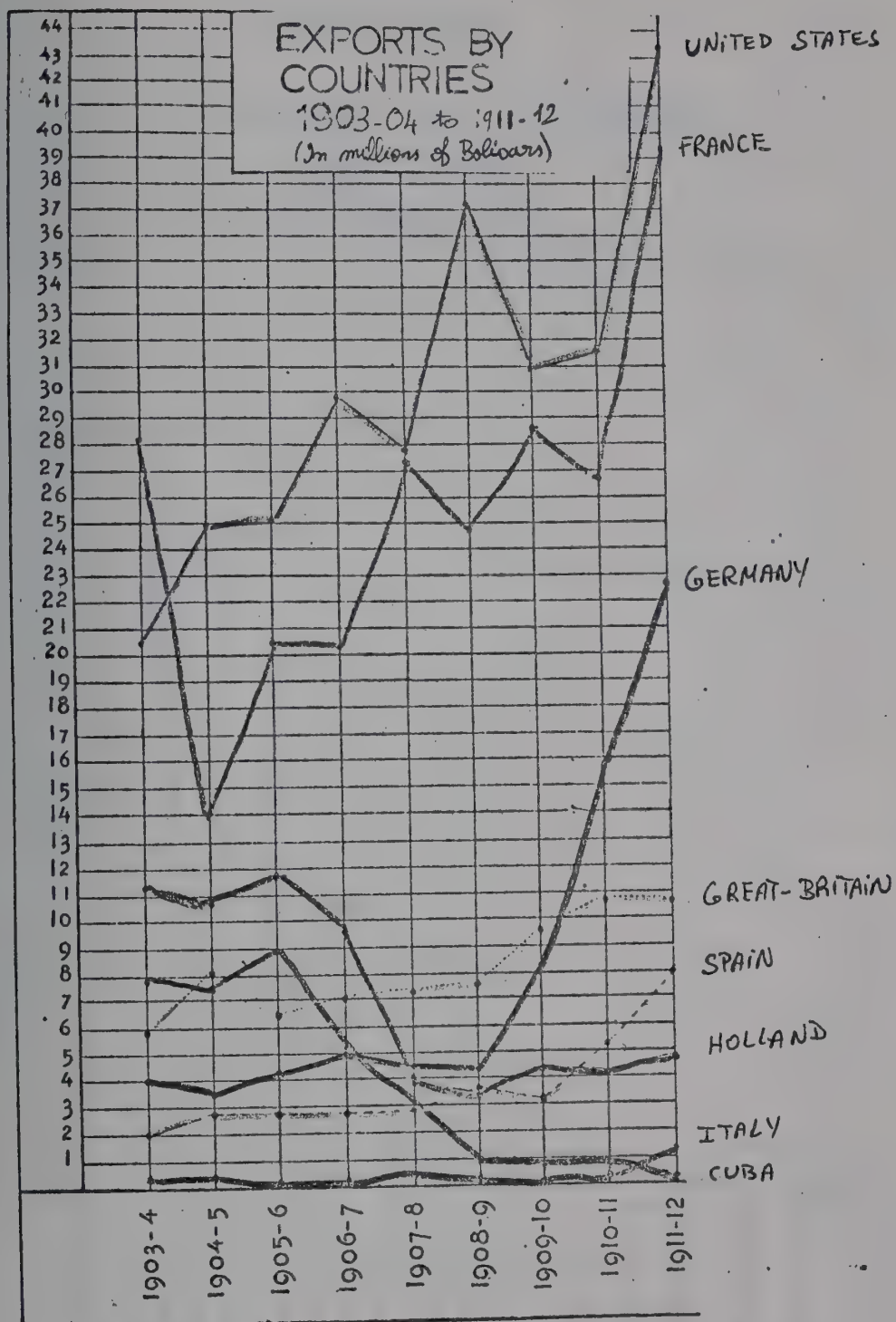
2. Gómez died on December 17, 1935, in Maracay. His adversaries contend that the death actually occurred on December 15, but was kept secret for two days so as to coincide with Bolívar's death anniversary date, a further coincidence since Gómez's birthdate and Bolívar's were also the same, July 24. There is little ground to this, and anyway, it is a detail of very slight importance.



SOURCE: Boletín de Estadística, Año I, n° 2

p. 88

VENEZUELA



SOURCE: Anuario Estadístico, 1910 p. 423

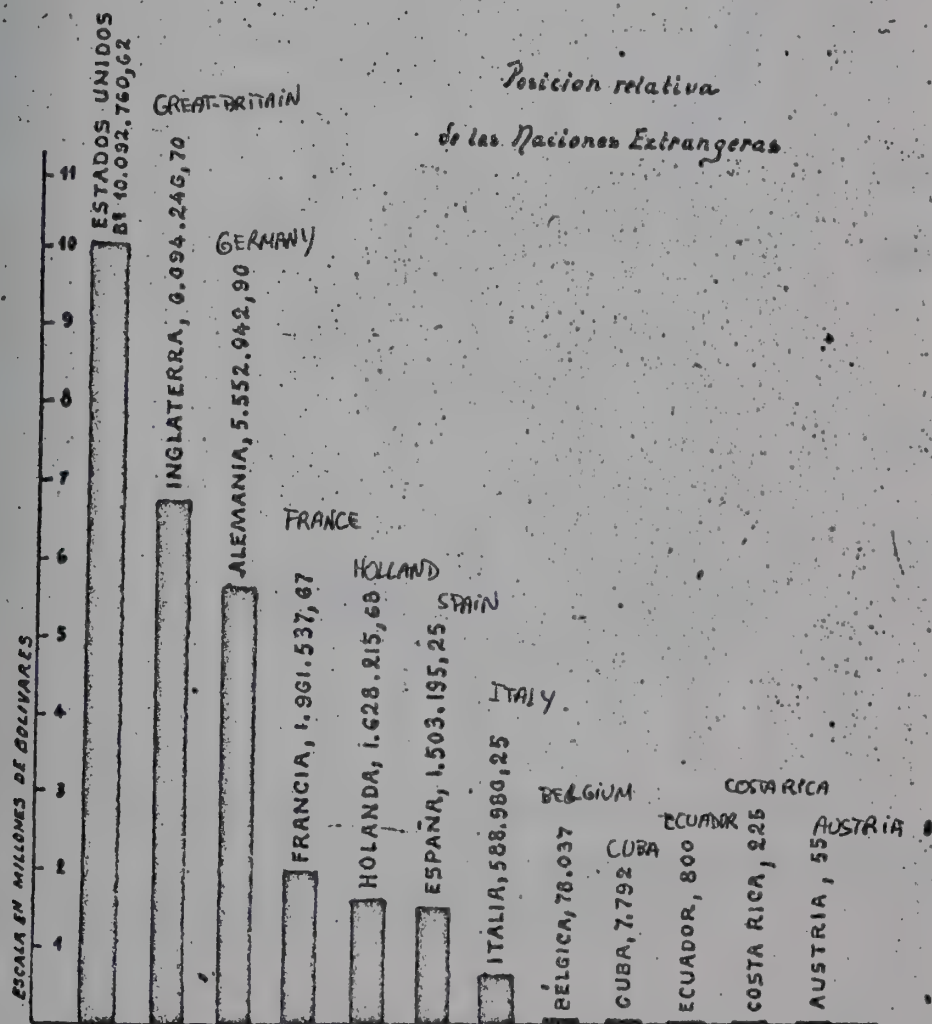
VENEZUELA

IMPORTS BY COUNTRIES

1902 - 1903

(In millions of Bolívares)

UNITED STATES



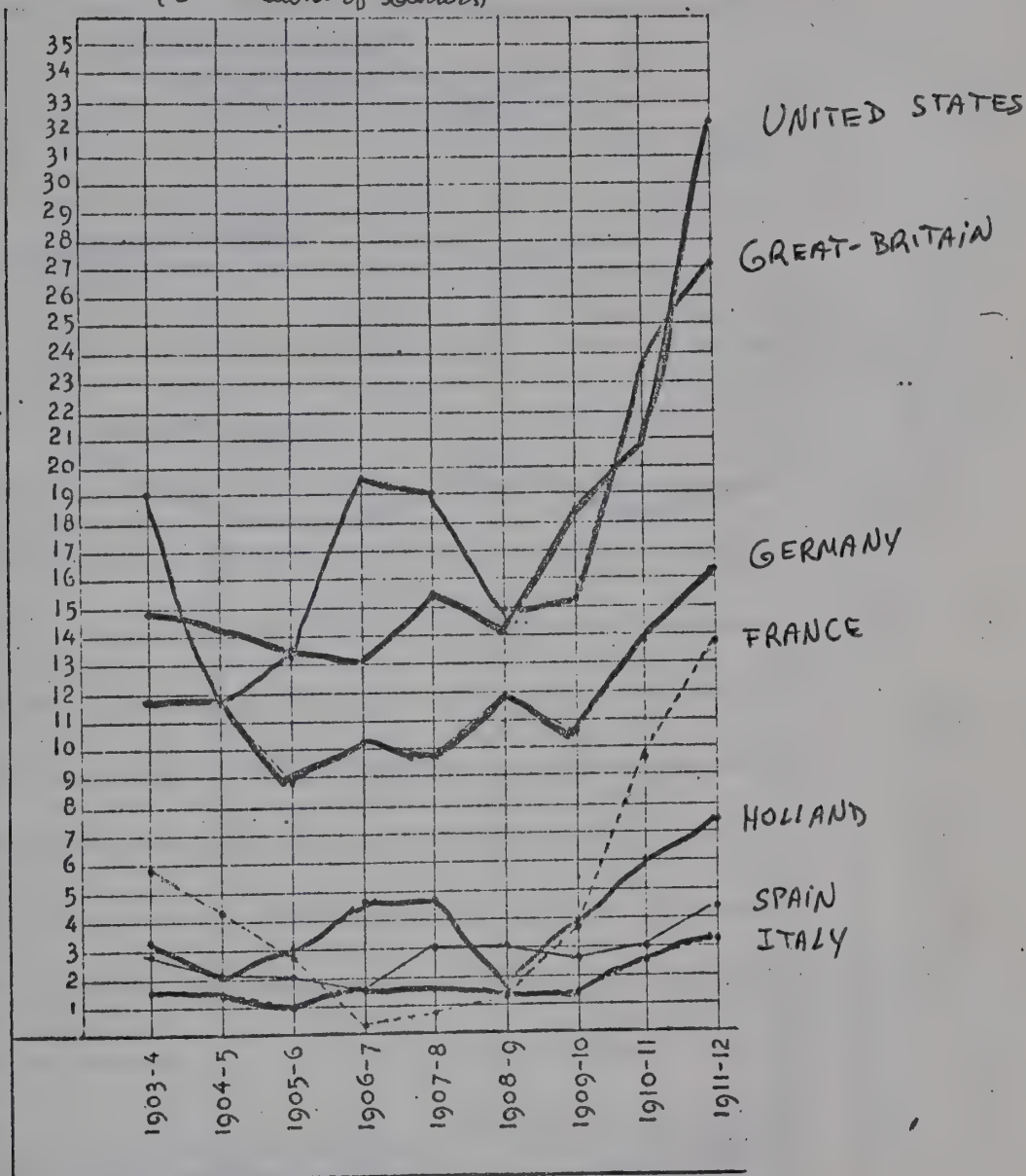
SOURCE: Boletín de Estadística, Año I, n° 2

, p. 184

VENEZUELA

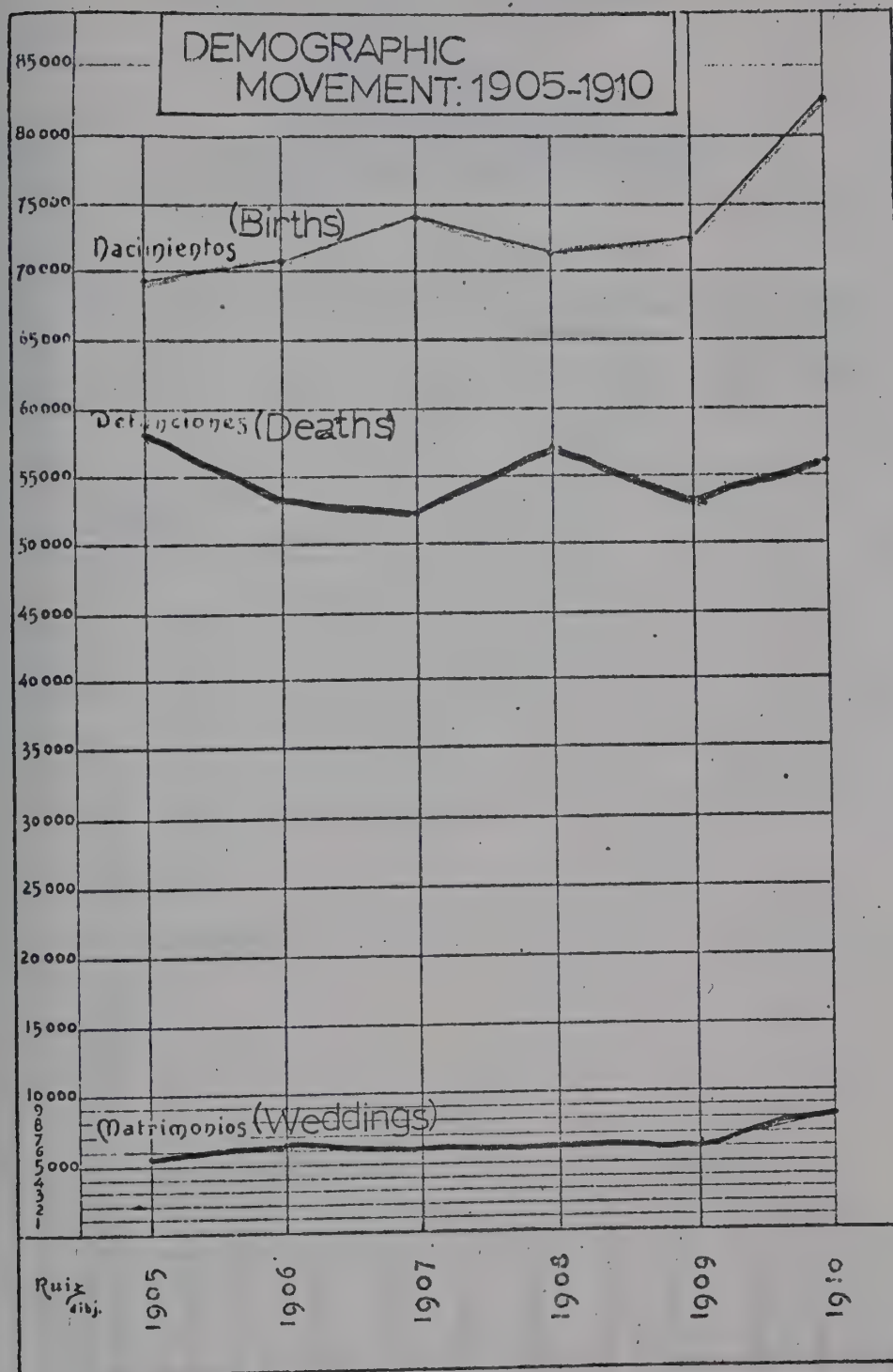
IMPORTS BY COUNTRIES
1903-04 to 1911-12

(In millions of Bolívars)



SOURCE : *Anuario Estadístico*, 1910, p. 431

VENEZUELA



SOURCE: Anuario Estadístico, 1910, p. 399

COFFEE

CAFE
20 857 801'9

RELATIVE POSITION

OF THE MAIN PRODUCTS
EXPORTED BY VENEZUELA
IN THE FISCAL YEAR
1902-1903

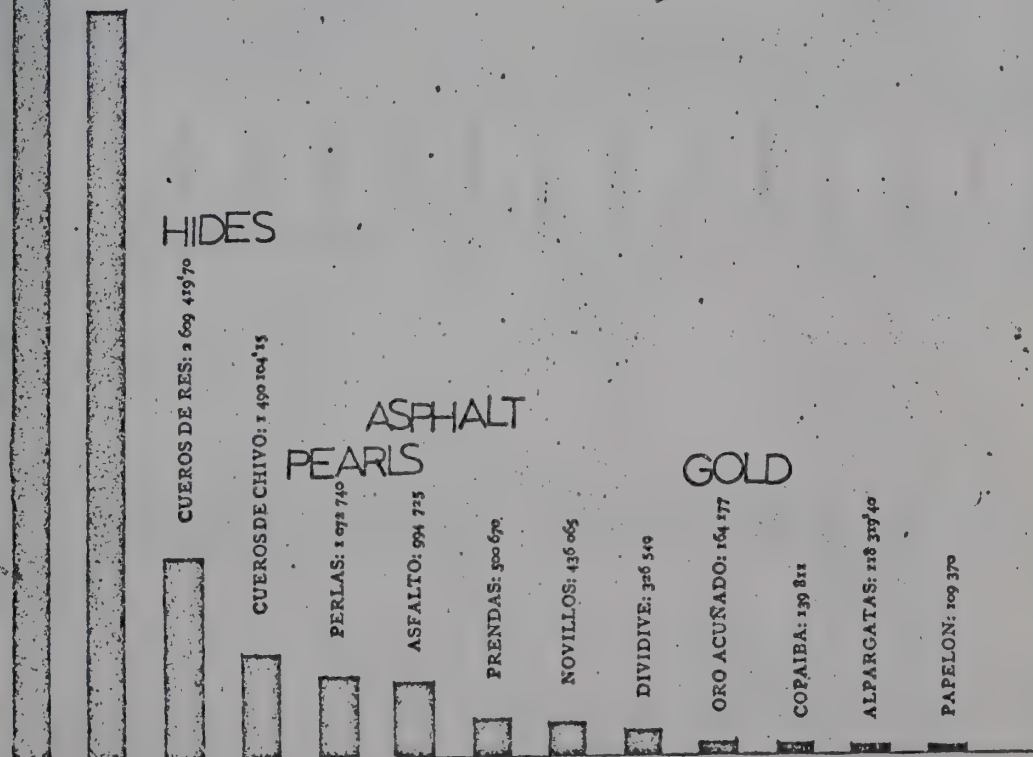
(Valued in Bolivars)

The data from Ciudad Bolívar, Coto Colorado,
and Güiria were not available, on account
of the War.

Exportación total de los 13 artículos de este cuadro...	38 569 707'68
» » » 122 » restantes	1 081 870'91
» » general en el año.....	39 651 578'59

CACAO.

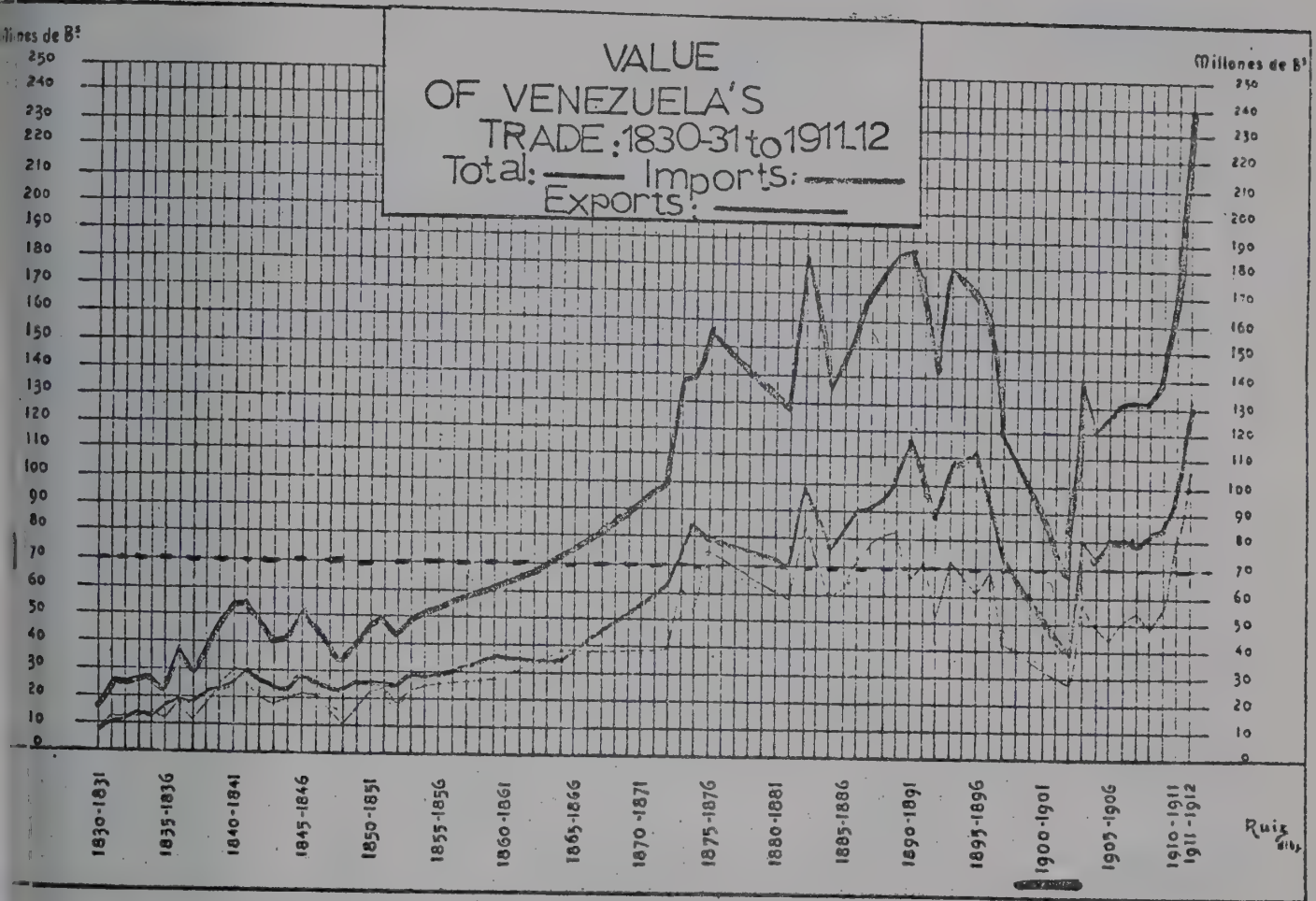
CACAO: 9 779 945'49



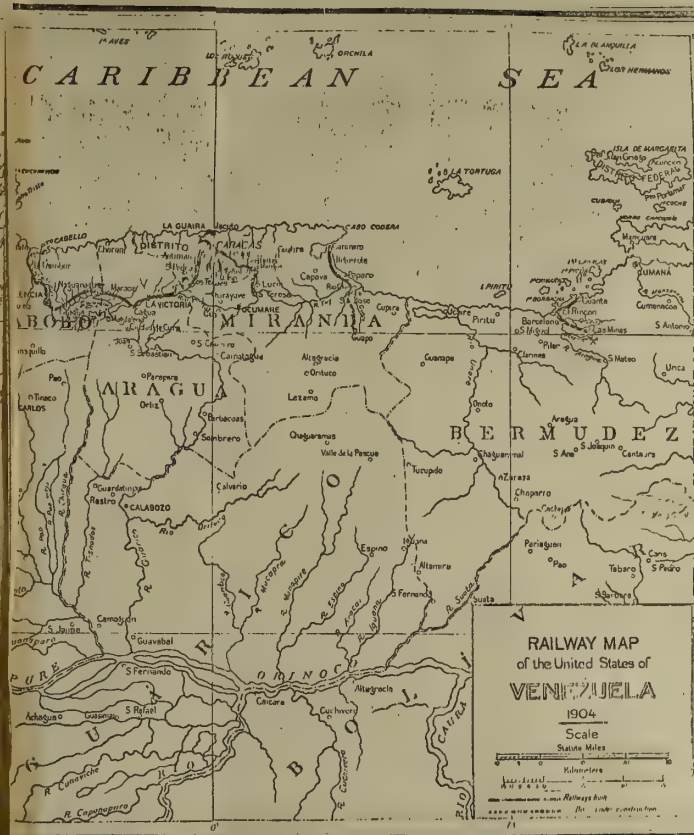
SOURCE : Boletín de Estadística, Año I, n° 3, p. 124

APPENDIX

VI



SOURCE : Anuario Estadístico, 1910, p. 445

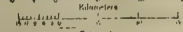


RAILWAY MAP
of the United States of
VENUEZUELA

1904

Scale

Statute Miles



RAILROADS AND CANALS
RAILROADS AND CANALS
RAILROADS AND CANALS

SOURCE: Handbook of Venezuela, 1904, p. 474

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This collection, provided with a thorough index, is bound under the general heading Archivo del General Manuel Landaeta Rosales. Of particular interest are the titles:

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Revoluciones de Venezuela: La Revolución de Cipriano Castro, X, 49.

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- b) Also kept in the Archival Section of the National Academy of History are the personal papers of General José Manuel Hernández, "El Mocho." These are primarily made out of the newspaper clippings kept by Hernández during his years of exile. They are referred to as:

Documentos del General José Manuel Hernández, XV, 1-36.

- c) The unpublished papers of Laureano Vallenilla Lanz are kept in Paris, 37 avenue d'Iéna. They consist of a series of notebooks, referred to as Cuadernos and of a series of miscellaneous articles, studies, press clippings and comments, many of them concerned with Venezuela under the Castro period.

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H. Newspapers and Periodicals

1. Newspapers

a.) Venezuela

The major newspapers in Venezuela, during the Castro period were the Caracas-based El Tiempo, which ran until 1902, and El Constitucional, the official government paper, which ran, under the direction of Gumersindo Rivas, from 1901 to 1908. Another source was the English-language newspaper, The Venezuelan Herald, edited by Alfred E. Jaurett, and published until 1904, when Jaurett was expelled from Venezuela. Most of the statistical data for the early Castro period, including sometimes the consular reports themselves, were taken from the Herald's pages.

Other Venezuelan newspapers, of lesser interest for this study include:

La República (Caracas, 1899-1908).

La Linterna Mágica (Caracas, 1899-1908).

Also the periodical El Cojo Ilustrado (Caracas).

b.) United States

Primarily The (New York) Times.

c.) France

Le Temps (Paris).

Le Matin (Paris).

Le Petit Parisien (Paris).

d.) Other

Through his years in office, Castro maintained close contacts with several European journalists who ran a series of laudatory articles in their respective newspapers on the regime and its policies. Among these were Antonio Pietri Daudet who directed the Revue Américaine, a bi-weekly Belgian publication, or the Frenchman Louis Bonafoux who ran articles in El Heraldo de Madrid and El Heraldo de Paris, a Spanish-language newspaper, circulated in the French capital.

2. Periodicals

I have relied more heavily on periodicals than on newspapers for the purpose of this paper. Numerous articles were written both on Castro and on Venezuela in the contemporary journals.

a.) Contemporary Journals

United States

The Independent. This is the journal that probably followed most closely the events of Venezuela. A factor to that effect might be the fact that its editor, Clarence Bowen, was the brother of Herbert W. Bowen, U. S. Minister to Caracas from 1901 to 1904.

American Journal of International Law.

American Law Review

The Review of Reviews

Law Quarterly

World's Work

The Nation

World-To-Day

Harper's Weekly

The Contemporary Review

The North American Review

The Missionary Review

The Outlook

Everybody's Magazine

Current Literature

Scientific American

The Era

The Scientific Monthly

The Arena

Gunton's Magazine

The Atlantic Monthly

The National Geographic Magazine

Collier's Magazine

The Literary Digest

Great Britain

The Saturday Review

The Graphic

The Westminster Review

The Illustrated London News

The Nineteenth Century
and After

The Fortnightly Review

The South American Journal. Probably the best periodical on Latin America for economic data. Insofar as Venezuela, these were mostly taken from the Venezuelan Herald.

France

Questions Diplomatiques et Coloniales

La Revue Générale de Droit International Public. This journal carried the best in-depth articles, particularly with regard to international law, on Venezuela and its problems.

La Revue Politique et Parlementaire.

La Revue des Deux Mondes.

L'Illustration.

La Revue Latine.

Le Correspondant.

La Revue de Paris.

L'Economiste Français.

La Revue Bleue.

Belgium

Revue Générale.

Germany

Die Zukunft.

Canada

The Canadian Magazine.

Argentina

Revista de Derecho, Historia y Letras.

A detailed index of the articles consulted is in the hands of Dr. Berta Becerra, Head of the Latin American Section of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Library.

b.) Later Articles

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c.) Miscellaneous

Since 1968, a series of small articles has been appearing irregularly in the two major Caracas newspapers El Nacional and El Universidad on Venezuelan history, and, more particularly, on the Castro-Gomez period. These small articles rely almost entirely on material published in the Boletín del Archivo Historico de Miraflores. They are presented by Francisco Salazar-Martínez in El Universal and by Marcos Figueroa S. in El Nacional.

Otherwise, the Venezuelan press carries, episodically, articles that refer to Cipriano Castro and his time. Some of the most important among these are:

Alegrett, Sebastián. "El General Cipriano Castro en Trujillo," La Esfera (Caracas, January 1960).

Cedillo, V. J. "Gómez, un Montañas Extraordinario," Elite (Caracas, 18 Diciembre 1970).

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León, Ramón David. "35 años de su desaparición," El Universal (Caracas, 19 Diciembre 1970).

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Before ending this lengthy bibliography, I must offer a word of thanks and recognition to the work of Dr. Ramon J. Velásquez, one-time Secretary of the Presidency, currently Minister of Communications. Without him, no valid research on the early period of Venezuela's twentieth century history could have been conducted. As the initiator of the Boletín del Archivo Historico de Miraflores, of collections such as the Biblioteca de autores y temas tachirenses, or Venezuela peregrina,

geared to the reprinting of rare or little known texts, he has made public a mass of documentary evidence that would probably have disappeared otherwise. It is thanks to men of such initiative, that the study of history can be perpetrated. Dr. Velásquez's recent election to Venezuela's National Academy of History is a deserved consecration for his efforts.

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